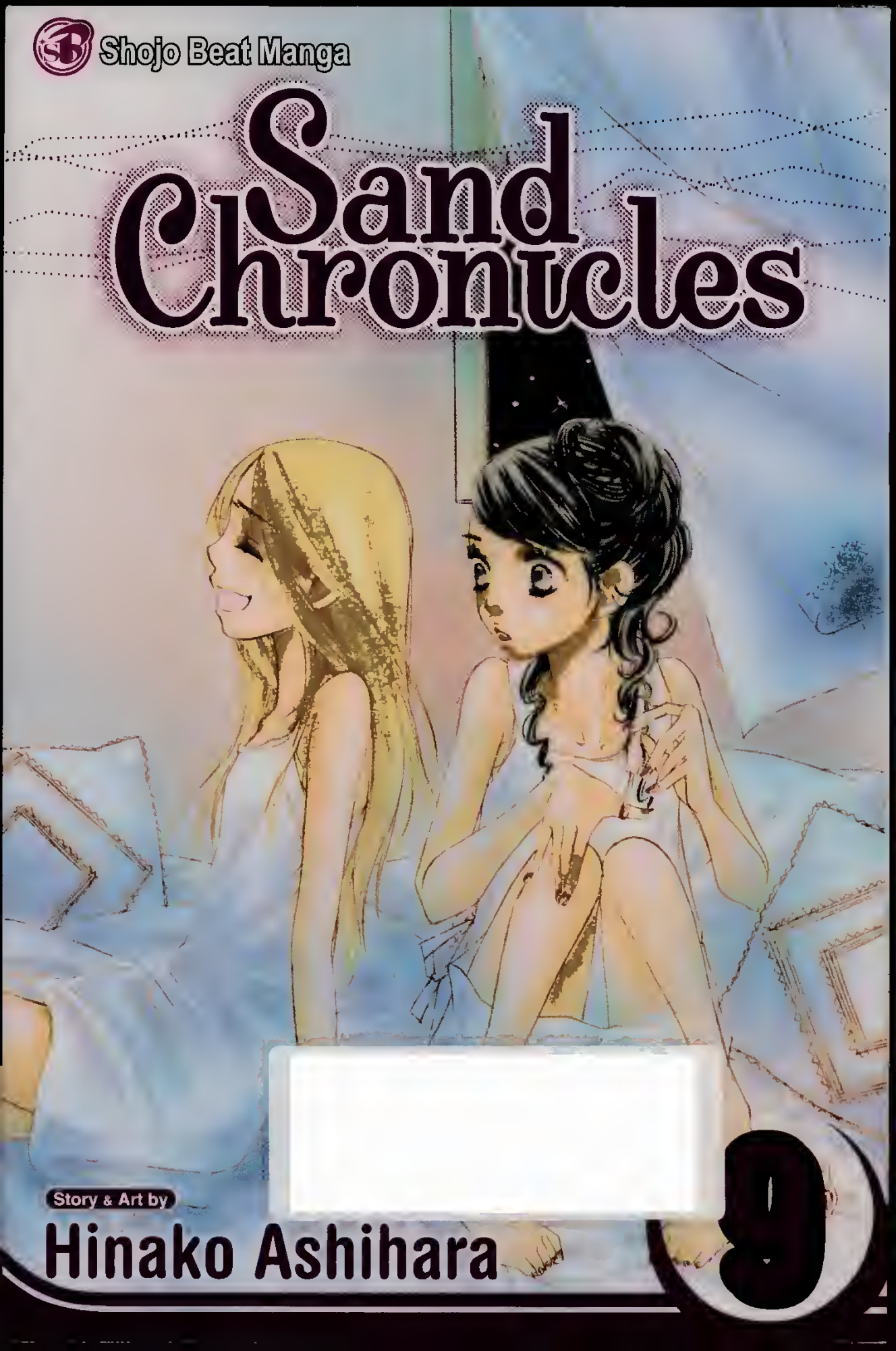
Shojo Beat Manga

Sand Chronicles



Story & Art by

Hinako Ashihara

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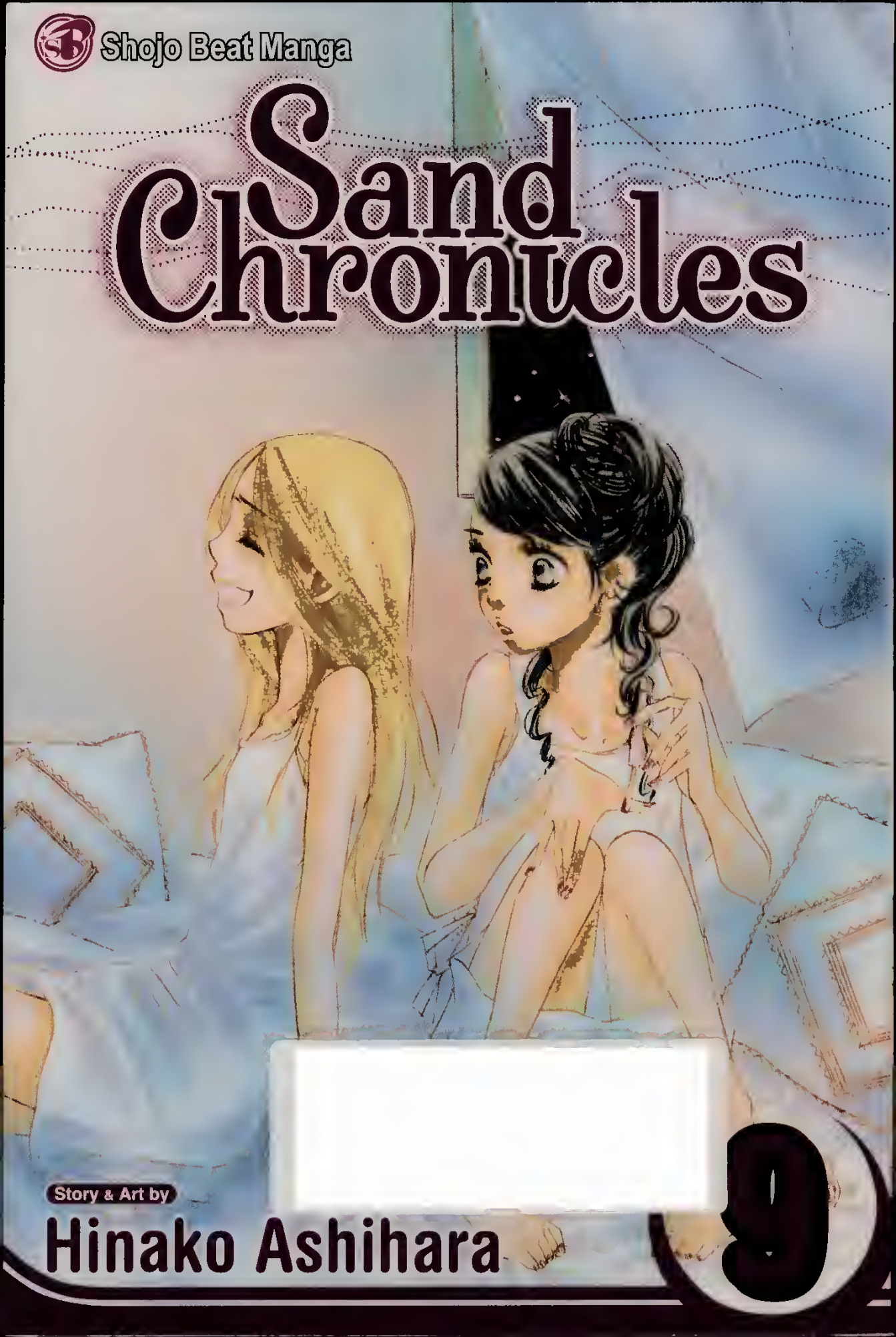
Shojo Beat Manga

Sand Chronicles



Story & Art by

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Shojo Beat
MANGA FROM THE HEART

THE REAL DRAMA BEGINS IN...

Sand Chronicles

What were our parents like at our age? We'll never really know... But now you can get a glimpse into the teenage years of the mothers of Ann, Daigo, Fuji and Shika! How were their destinies shaped? Plus, Ann's little sister visits Shika—and Ann's ex-fiancé!—in New York City.

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Can the sands of time bury the pain of the past?

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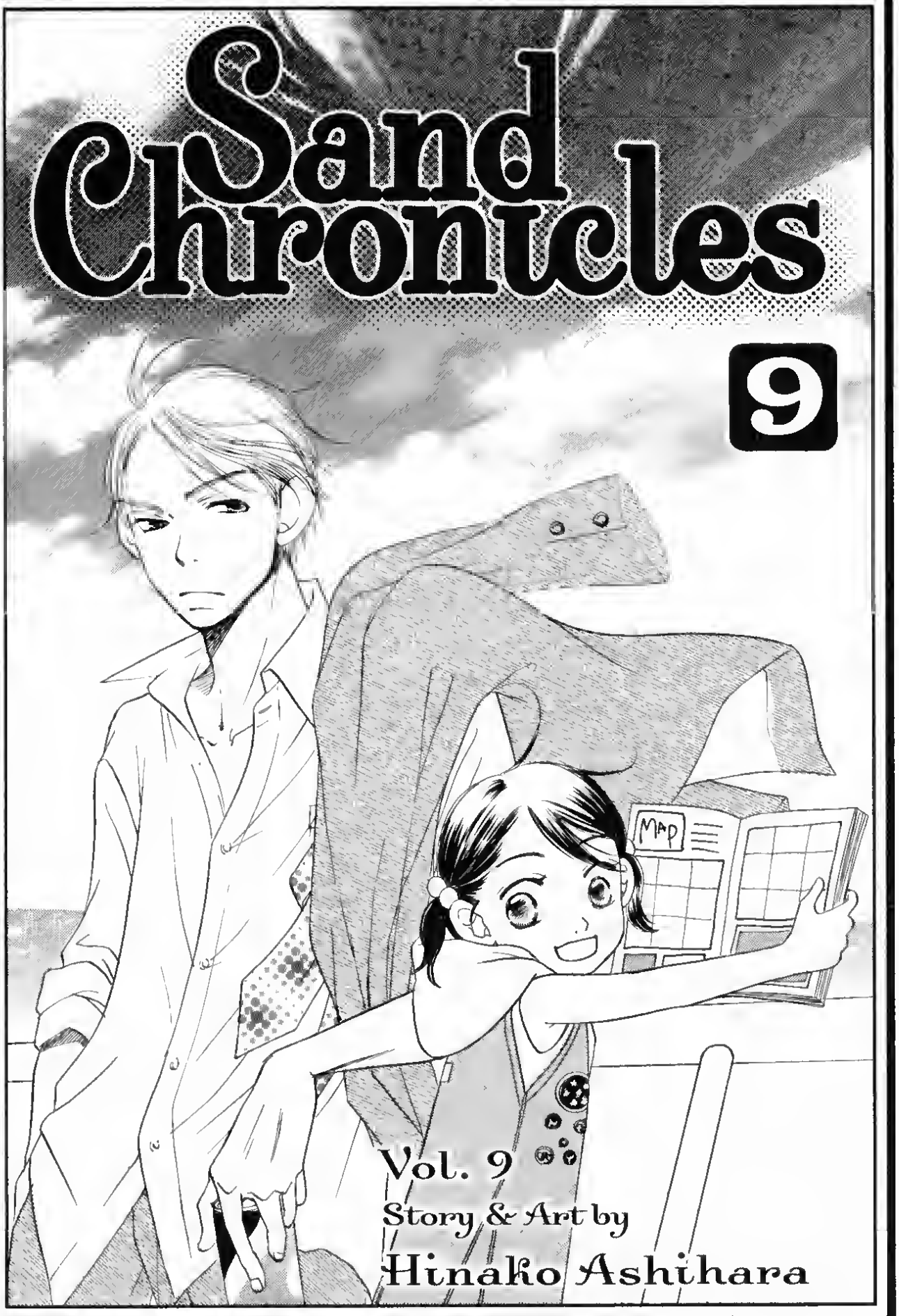
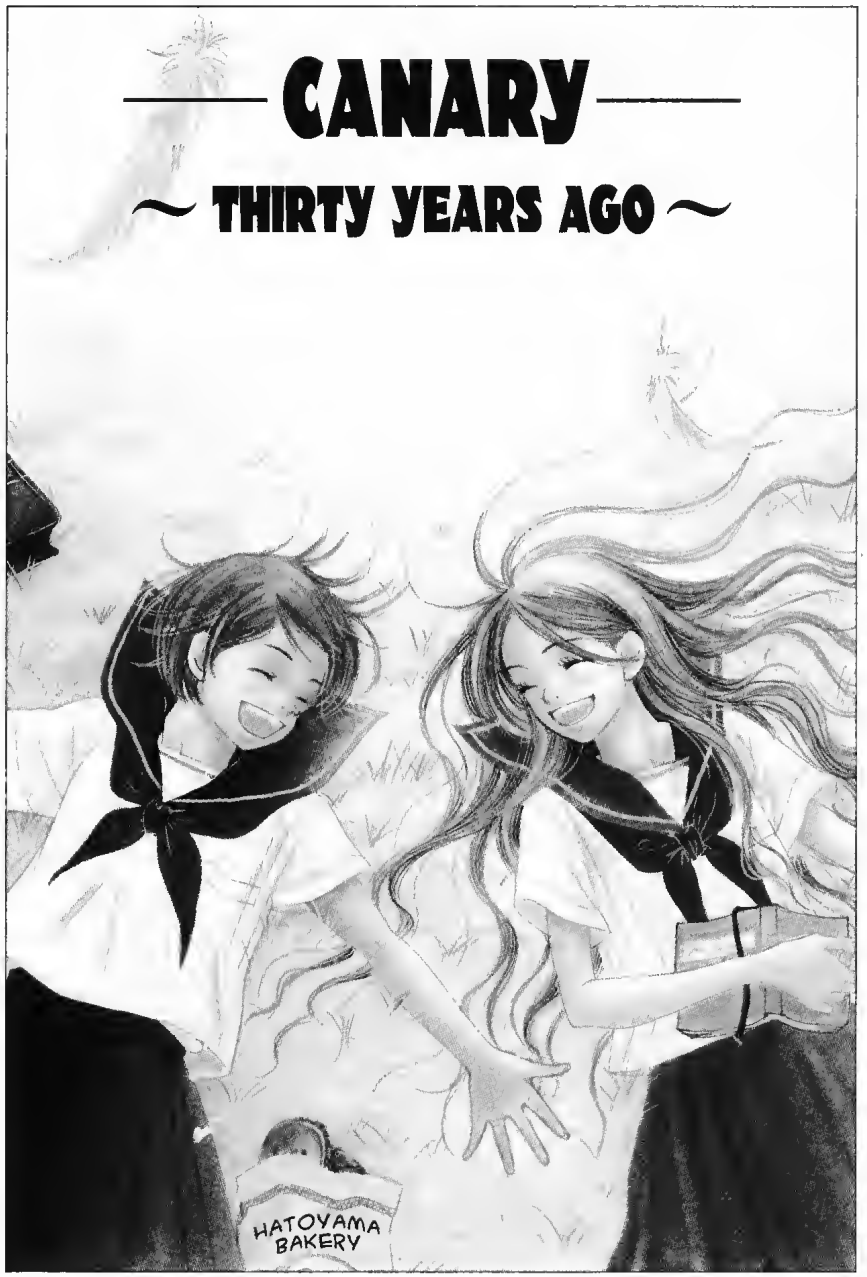


Vol. 9

Story & Art by

Hinako Ashihara



CANARY

~ THIRTY YEARS AGO ~

Sand Chronicles

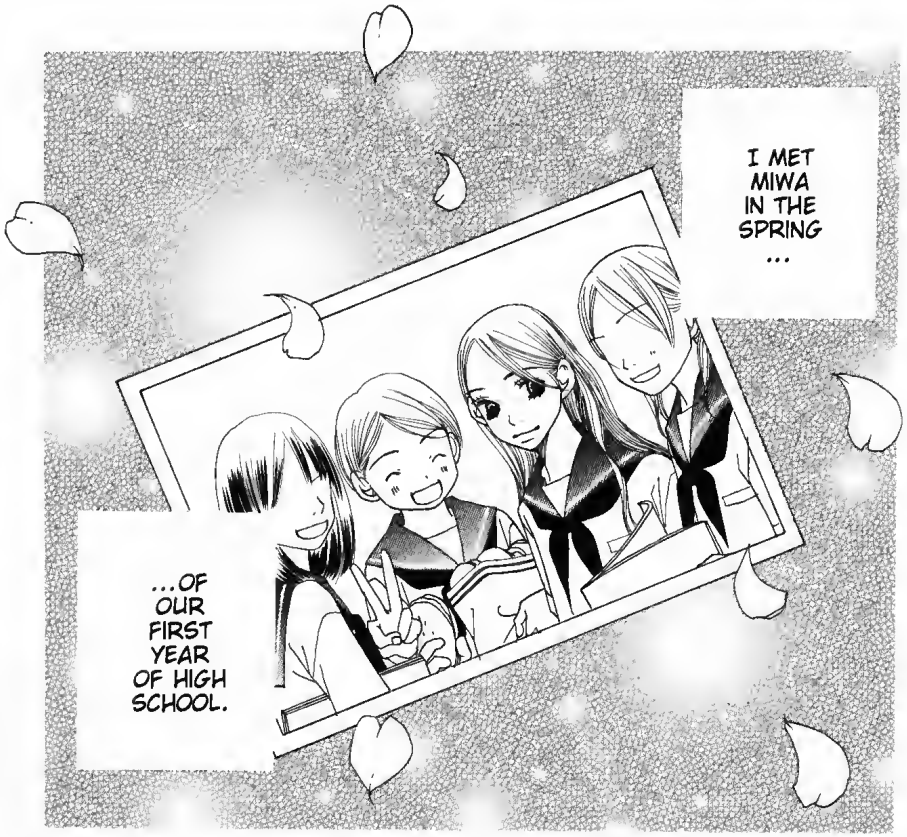
Volume 9

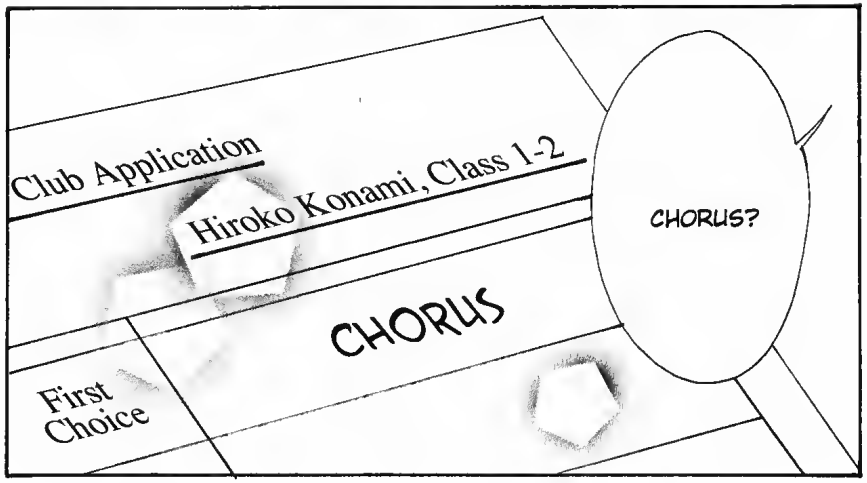
Contents

Bonus Episodes
Canary—5
~Thirty Years Ago~
Summer Vacation—107
The Present—169
Glossary—186

Story thus far...

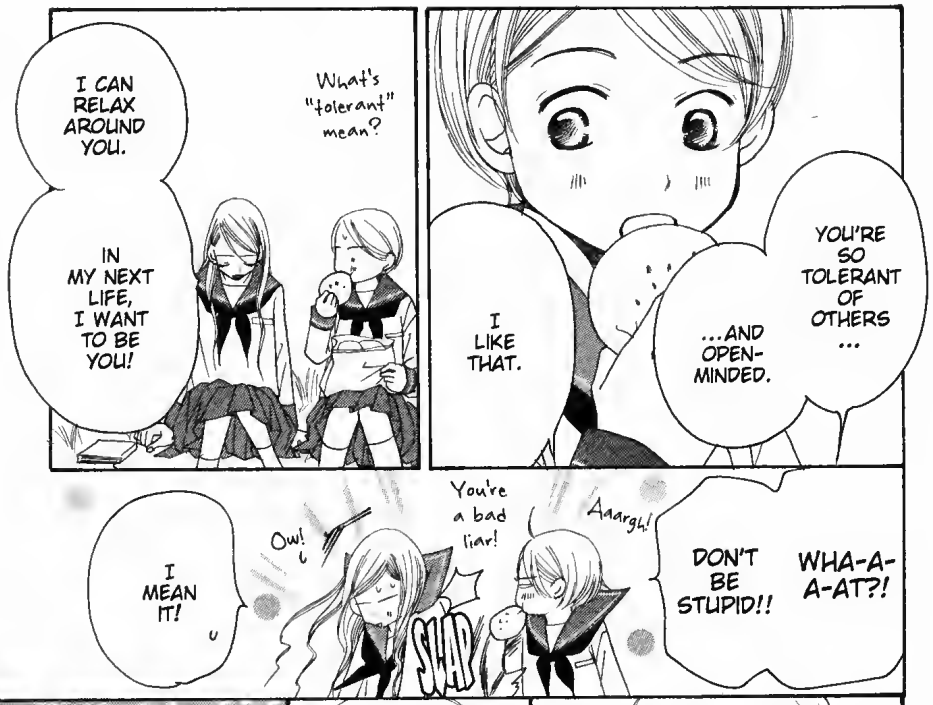
It took years for Ann to come to terms with her mother Miwako's suicide. Now she is happily married to Daigo, her childhood boyfriend. These are the stories of their parents and their friends' parents, a generation before... Plus bonus side stories not included in the original series!


I MET MIWA IN THE SPRING ...
...OF OUR FIRST YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL.

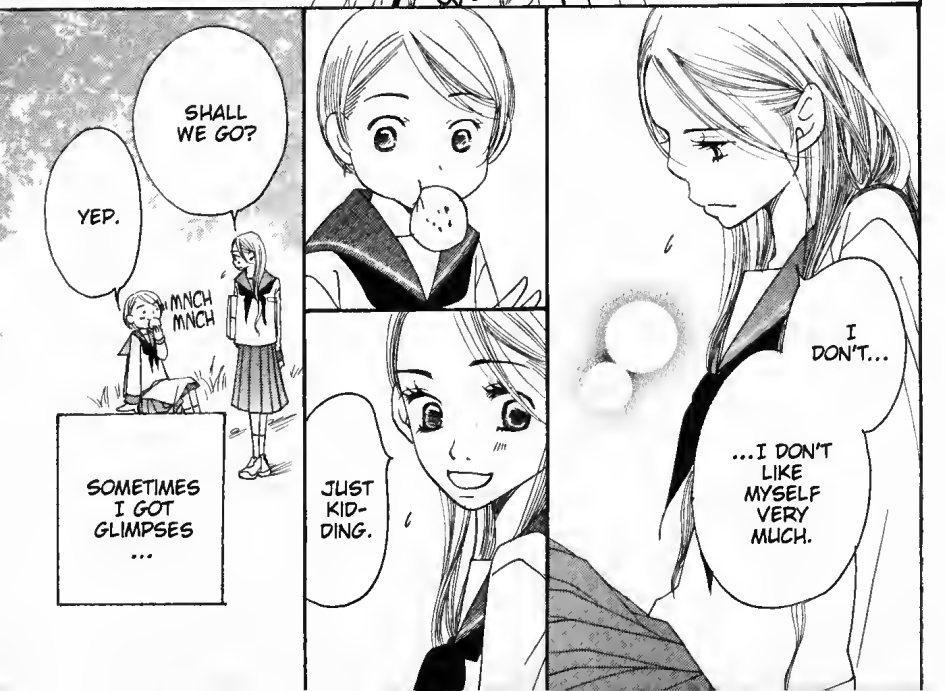

Club Application
Hiroko Konami, Class 1-2
CHORUS
First Choice
CHORUS?

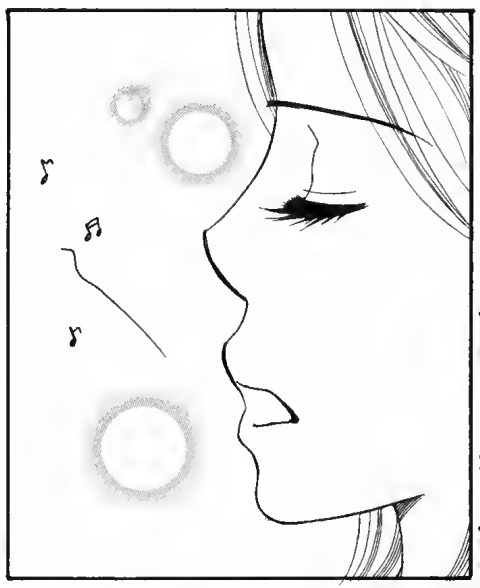
THAT WAS MY FIRST IMPRESSION OF MIWA.
I WANNA BE JUST LIKE HER!!
SHE'S REALLY NICE!
SHE'S BEAUTIFUL, BUT SHE ISN'T STUCK-UP.
EVERYONE THOUGHT SHE WAS PERFECT.
NO ONE EVEN SPREAD JEALOUS RUMORS ABOUT HER.
SHE LOOKED FRAGILE ...
...BUT STRONG ON THE INSIDE.
SHE WAS KIND AND CHEERFUL AND WASN'T A SNOB.
HI, HIROKO!

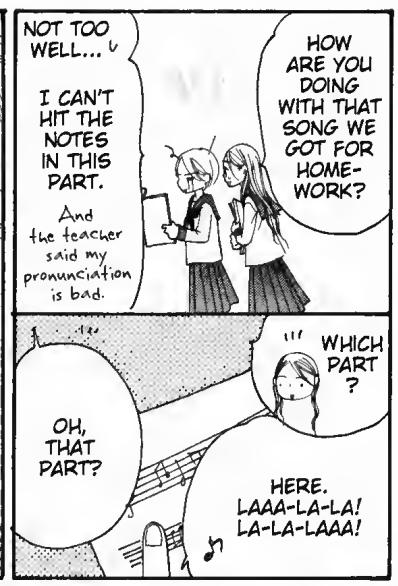
THAT'S GREAT! ME TOO!
I WAS AFRAID I WOULDN'T KNOW ANYONE.
I'M MIWAKO UEKUSA.
NICE TO MEET YOU!
SHE WAS REALLY BEAUTIFUL.
I TALKED TO MIWAKO TODAY!!
She's so skinny and pretty!
Eeeee!
IT'S LIKE SHE... GLOWS! SHE LOOKS JUST LIKE THIS ACTRESS I SAW IN AN OLD MOVIE LAST NIGHT.
A late-night classic?
I KNOW EXACTLY WHO YOU MEAN! SHE DOES!
She really does!

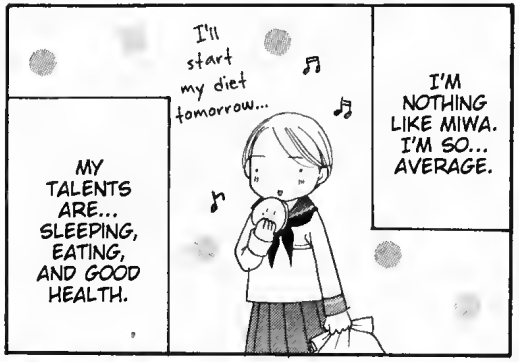

I CAN RELAX AROUND YOU.
IN MY NEXT LIFE, I WANT TO BE YOU!
What's "tolerant" mean?
I LIKE THAT.
YOU'RE SO TOLERANT OF OTHERS ...
...AND OPEN-MINDED.

I MEAN IT!
Ow!
You're a bad liar!
SLAP
Aaargh!
DON'T BE STUPID!!
WHA-A-A-AT?!

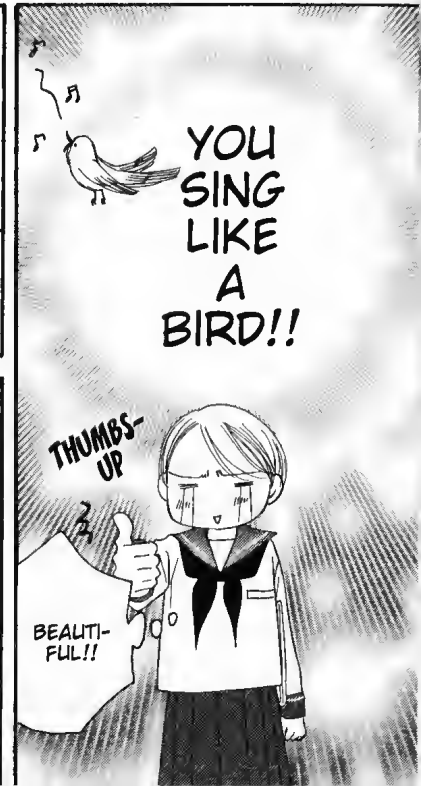

SHALL WE GO?
YEP.
MNCH MNCH
SOMETIMES I GOT GLIMPSES ...
JUST KID-DING.
I DON'T...
...I DON'T LIKE MYSELF VERY MUCH.




NOT TOO WELL...
I CAN'T HIT THE NOTES IN THIS PART.
And the teacher said my pronunciation is bad.
HOW ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT SONG WE GOT FOR HOME-WORK?
OH, THAT PART?
WHICH PART ?
HERE. LAAA-LA-LA! LA-LA-LAAA!


MY TALENTS ARE... SLEEPING, EATING, AND GOOD HEALTH.
I'll start my diet tomorrow...
I'M NOTHING LIKE MIWA. I'M SO... AVERAGE.

FROM THE MOMENT WE MET ...
...I KNEW I WANTED TO BE FRIENDS!
MIWA AND I HIT IT OFF ANYWAY.

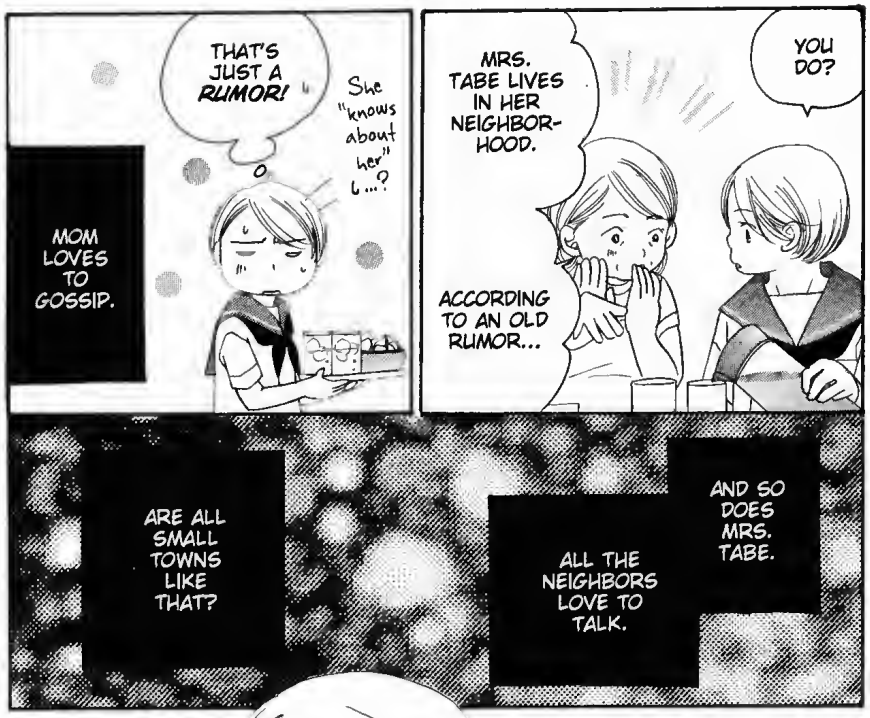

YOU SING LIKE A BIRD!!
THUMBS-UP
BEAUTI-FUL!!

MIWAKO ...
YOU NEED TO PRACTICE MORE.
KLP
STOP THERE!
THAT'S ENOUGH.
CHITTR CHITTR
PHEW
THANK YOU!!
...MS. KUROKAWA WILL HAVE THE SOLO.
IN THE NEXT COMPETI-TION...
I WAS POSITIVE I PRACTICED ENOUGH...
THAT WAS CLOSE. I ALMOST LOST THE SOLO TO MIWAKO— A FRESHMAN!
Didn't I?
As club president, that would have been embarrass-sing.
Eep! I'll work harder next year.
Slacker! I practice every day until it hurts!
AH HA HA
HA HA HA

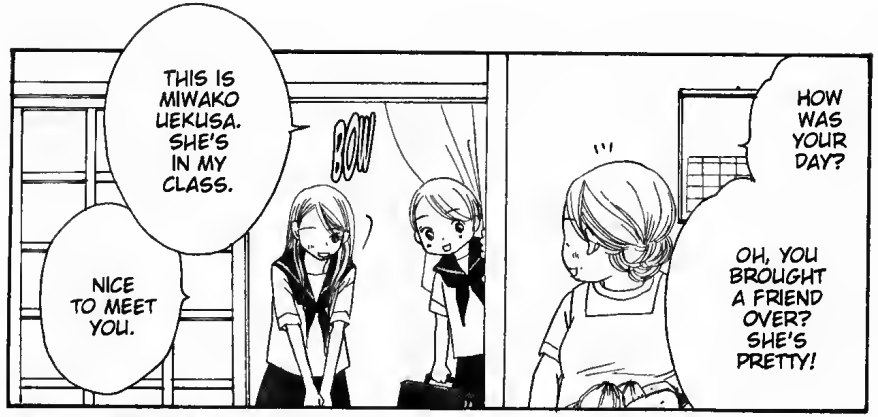
MUSIC ROOM
I REMEMBER THE DAY I FIRST NOTICED IT...
...OF HER UNSTABLE SIDE.
...SIGH

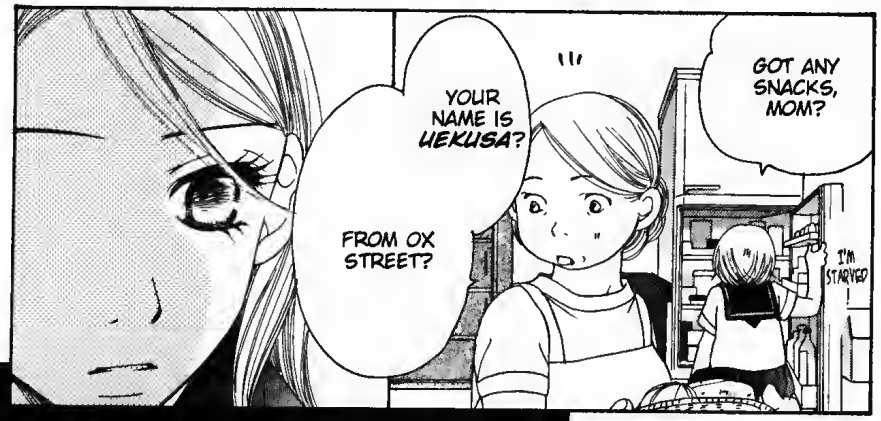
...BUT THEN I STARTED TO NOTICE THINGS...
SHE TRIED HARD NOT TO STAND OUT...
...AND ALWAYS PUT OTHERS' FEELINGS FIRST.
WAS SHE REALLY SO CARING ...
...OR JUST AFRAID OF NOT BEING LIKED?
I'M HO-O-OME!

MIWA...
DID YOU LET HER WIN?
WHAT?
'Course not.
I KNOW YOU REALLY WANTED THAT SOLO ...
YOU STAYED AFTER SCHOOL EVERY DAY TO PRACTICE.
AND YOU SOUNDED MUCH BETTER THAN YOU DID TODAY.
I WAS...
...A LITTLE NERVOUS.
I need more experience...
AT FIRST I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST MY IMAGINATION ...

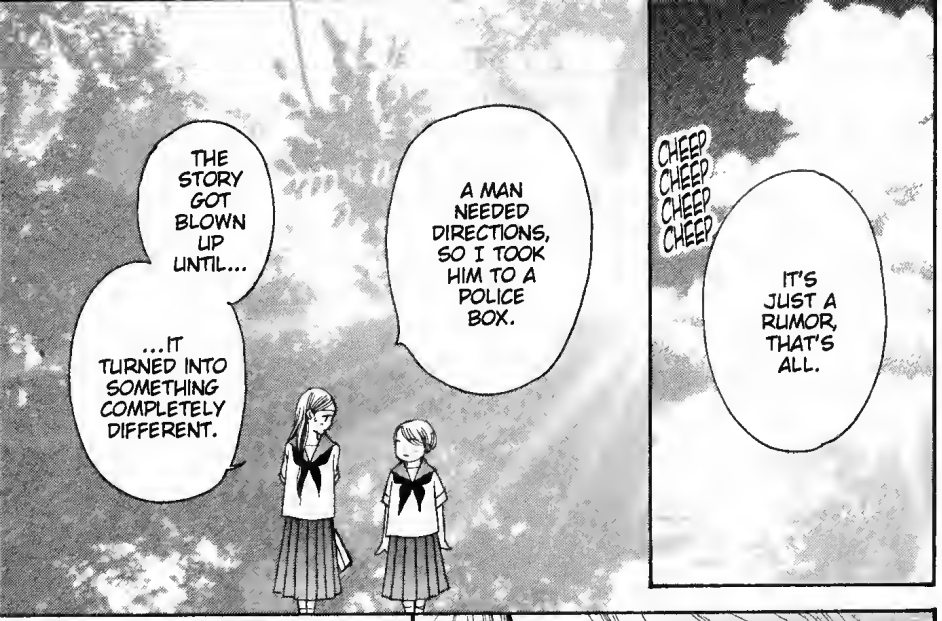

MOM LOVES TO GOSSIP.
THAT'S JUST A RUMOR!
She "knows about her" b...?
MRS. TABE LIVES IN HER NEIGHBOR-HOOD.
ACCORDING TO AN OLD RUMOR...
YOU DO?
ARE ALL SMALL TOWNS LIKE THAT?
ALL THE NEIGHBORS LOVE TO TALK.
AND SO DOES MRS. TABE.

PST PST
SO-AND-SO'S WIFE IS STUCK-UP... OR...
SO-AND-SO HAS TUCKED AWAY QUITE A STASH...
WHEN SHE WAS YOUNGER, SHE DISAPPEARED FOR SEVERAL DAYS WITH A STRANGE MAN!!
YES, THAT WAS MIWAKO. I'M SURE OF IT!
THERE'S NO WAY TO KNOW WHAT'S TRUE OR NOT.


THIS IS MIWAKO UEKUSA. SHE'S IN MY CLASS.
BOW
NICE TO MEET YOU.
HOW WAS YOUR DAY?
OH, YOU BROUGHT A FRIEND OVER? SHE'S PRETTY!


YOUR NAME IS UEKUSA?
FROM OX STREET?
GOT ANY SNACKS, MOM?
I'M STARVED!

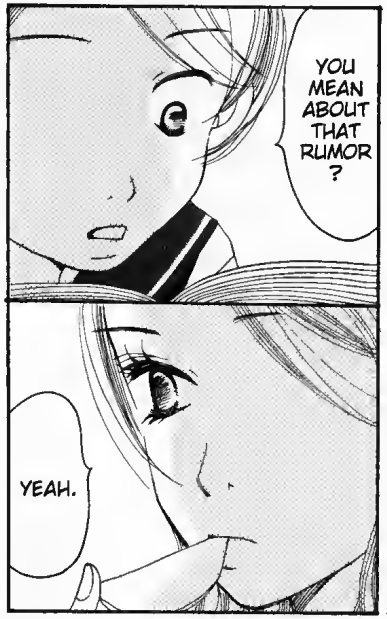
I KNOW ALL ABOUT HER...
YES.
STARE
STARE
HMM...
I see...

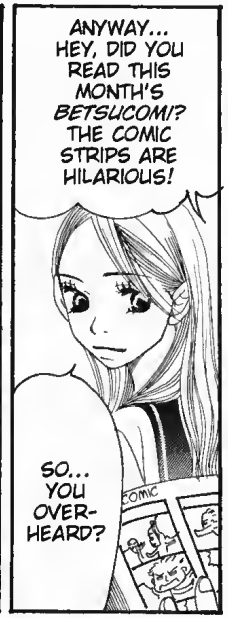

THE STORY GOT BLOWN UP UNTIL...
...IT TURNED INTO SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT.
A MAN NEEDED DIRECTIONS, SO I TOOK HIM TO A POLICE BOX.
CHEEP CHEEP CHEEP CHEEP
IT'S JUST A RUMOR, THAT'S ALL.

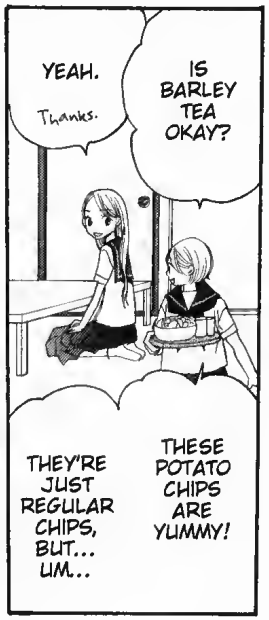
BUT ONCE IT'S BORN, IT KEEPS CHANGING SHAPE...
...LIKE A LIVING CREATURE.
I GUESS I SHOULDN'T ...
BUT IT'S PARTLY MY FAULT.
PEOPLE GOSSIP ABOUT *EVERYTHING* IN THIS VILLAGE.
Don't let it get to you.
PEOPLE INSINUATED DIRTY THINGS.
SAID I SEDUCED HIM. STUFF LIKE THAT.
THEY SAY A RUMOR LIVES FOR 75 DAYS...
THAT WAS YEARS AGO. I THOUGHT EVERYONE HAD FORGOTTEN ABOUT IT BY NOW.

WHAT AN AWFUL STORY...
IT'S JUST A RUMOR, ISN'T IT?
Be careful! It could even happen to you!
SHE'S SO PRETTY, IT'S NO WONDER.

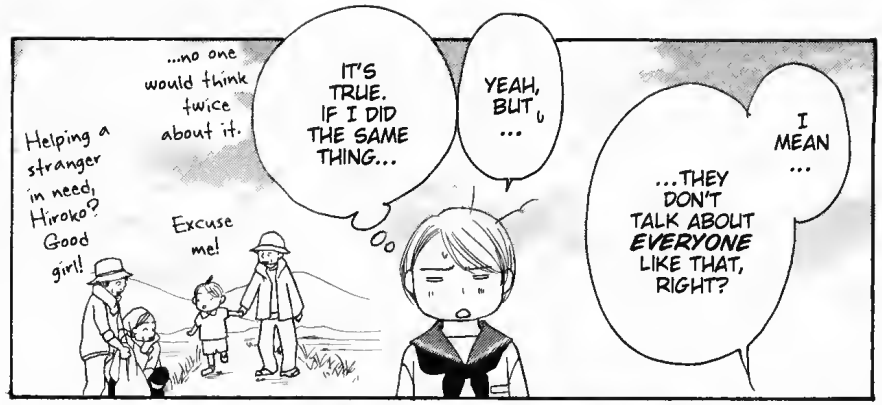
RATTLE
SORRY FOR THE WAIT.

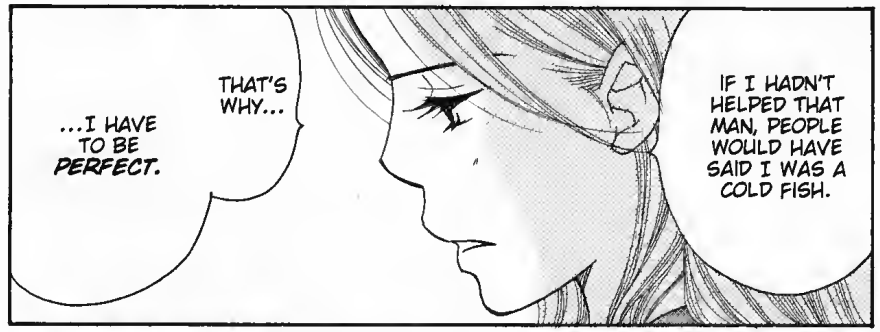

YOU MEAN ABOUT THAT RUMOR ?
YEAH.

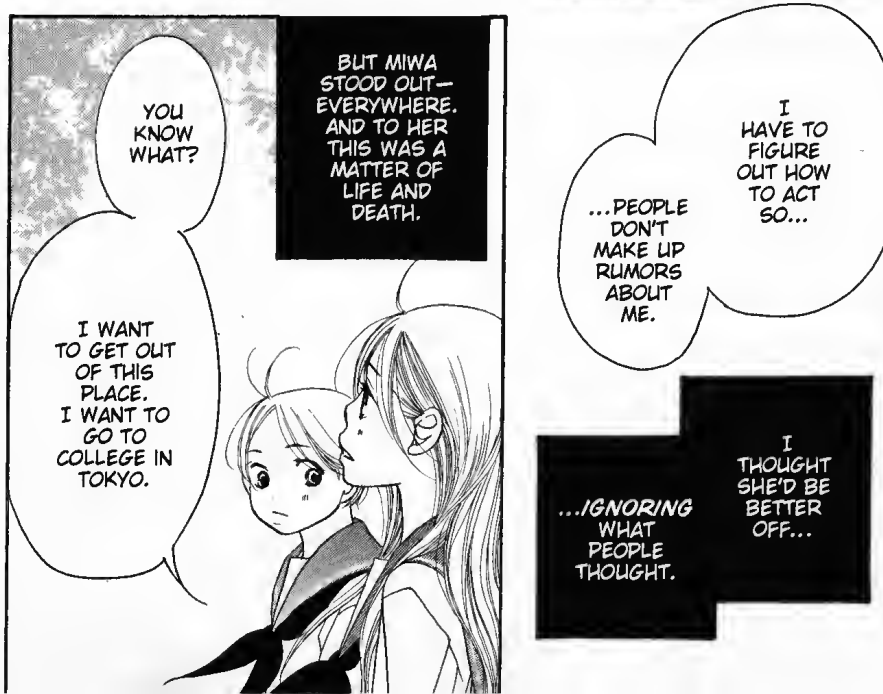

ANYWAY... HEY, DID YOU READ THIS MONTH'S *BETSUCOMI*? THE COMIC STRIPS ARE HILARIOUS!
SO... YOU OVER-HEARD?


YEAH.
Thanks.
IS BARLEY TEA OKAY?
THESE POTATO CHIPS ARE YUMMY!
THEY'RE JUST REGULAR CHIPS, BUT... UM...

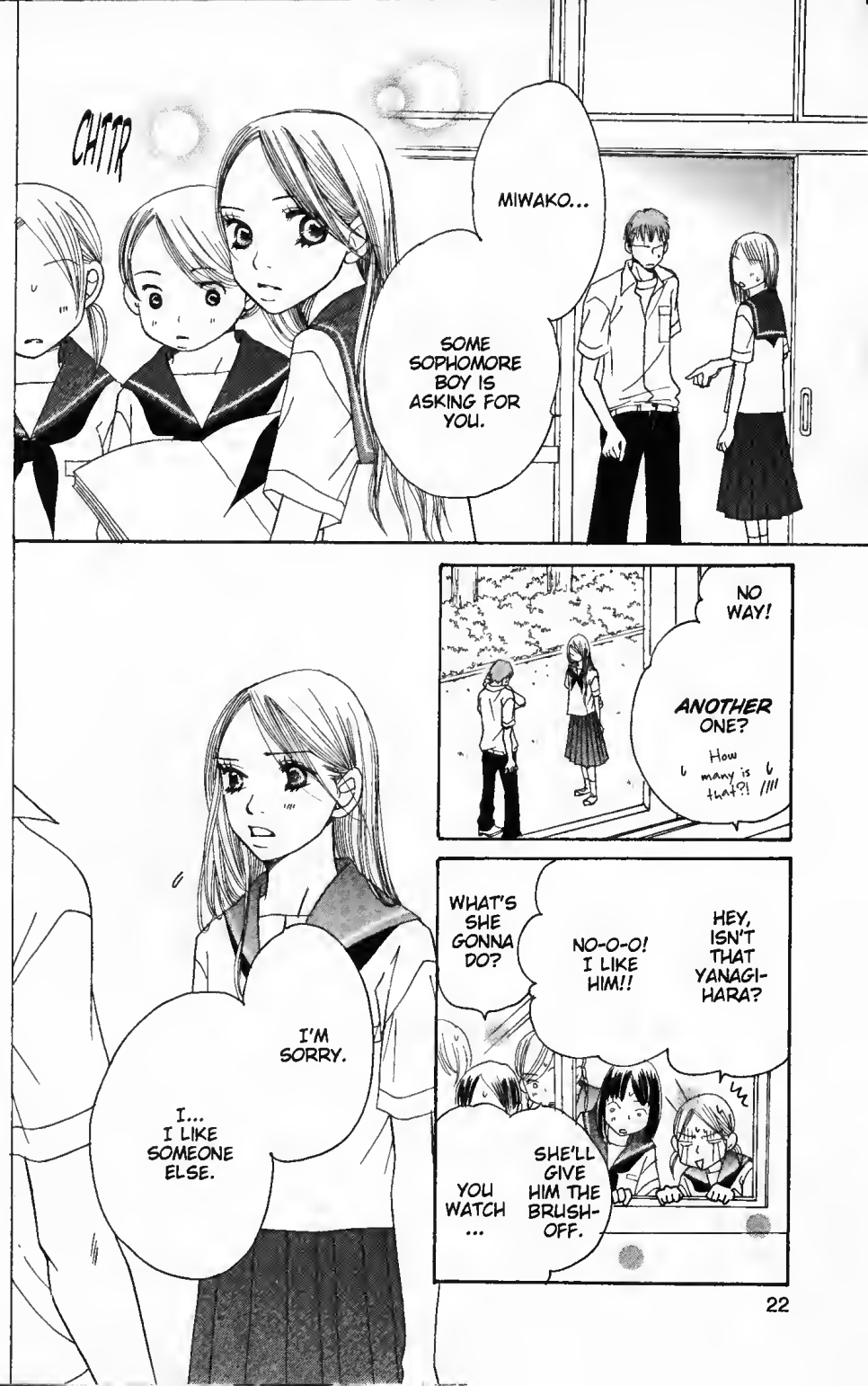
IF MIWA LEAVES ...
...WILL SHE...
...BE HAPPY?
BUT...
...MY MOTHER WON'T LET ME.
SKREEK


Helping a stranger in need, Hiroko? Good girl!
...no one would think twice about it.
Excuse me!
IT'S TRUE. IF I DID THE SAME THING...
YEAH, BUT ...
I MEAN ...
...THEY DON'T TALK ABOUT EVERYONE LIKE THAT, RIGHT?


...I HAVE TO BE PERFECT.
THAT'S WHY...
IF I HADN'T HELPED THAT MAN, PEOPLE WOULD HAVE SAID I WAS A COLD FISH.


YOU KNOW WHAT?
I WANT TO GET OUT OF THIS PLACE. I WANT TO GO TO COLLEGE IN TOKYO.
BUT MIWA STOOD OUT— EVERYWHERE. AND TO HER THIS WAS A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH.
...PEOPLE DON'T MAKE UP RUMORS ABOUT ME.
I HAVE TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO ACT SO...
...IGNORING WHAT PEOPLE THOUGHT.
I THOUGHT SHE'D BE BETTER OFF...

...BUT HE DOESN'T LIKE HER.
She told me.
SHE LIKES SOMEONE AT A DIFFERENT SCHOOL ...
Someone at A High
HE DOESN'T LIKE HER? But...she could have anyone she wants!
WHO?
I mean, she's got everything!
IT'S KIND OF ANNOYING!
IT'S THE SAFEST EXCUSE.
Water-fight.
I'VE NEVER HEARD MIWA MENTION ANYONE AT A HIGH.
HEH HEH ...
YEAH...
SHE HAS A NICE PERSONALITY, SO I CAN'T NOT LIKE HER, BUT ...
I HEARD A SOPHOMORE SAY THE SAME THING.
BUT YOU KNOW WHAT?
I BET...
...SHE MADE THAT UP AS A COVER STORY.

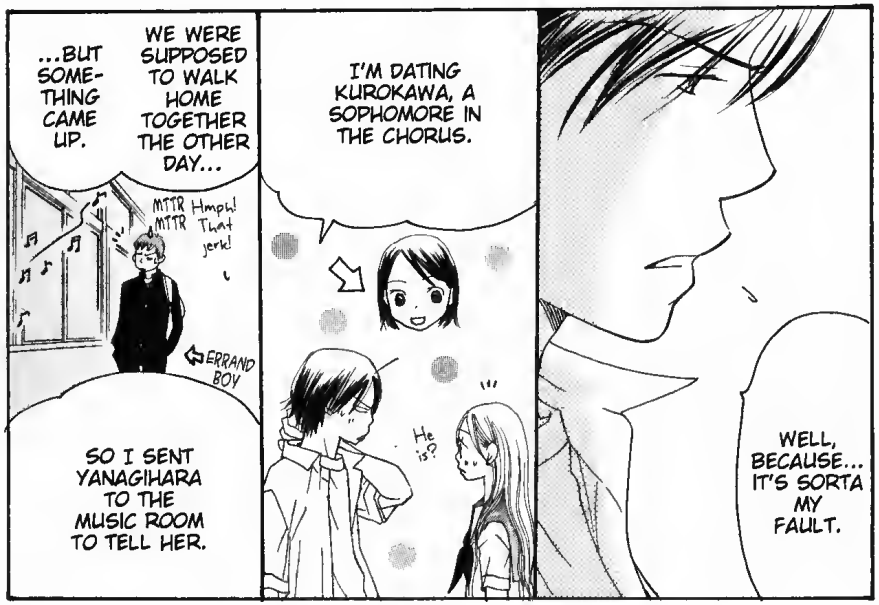

CHITR
MIWAKO...
SOME SOPHOMORE BOY IS ASKING FOR YOU.
NO WAY!
ANOTHER ONE?
How many is that?!
I'M SORRY.
I... I LIKE SOMEONE ELSE.
WHAT'S SHE GONNA DO?
NO-O-O! I LIKE HIM!!
HEY, ISN'T THAT YANAGI-HARA?
YOU WATCH ...
SHE'LL GIVE HIM THE BRUSH-OFF.

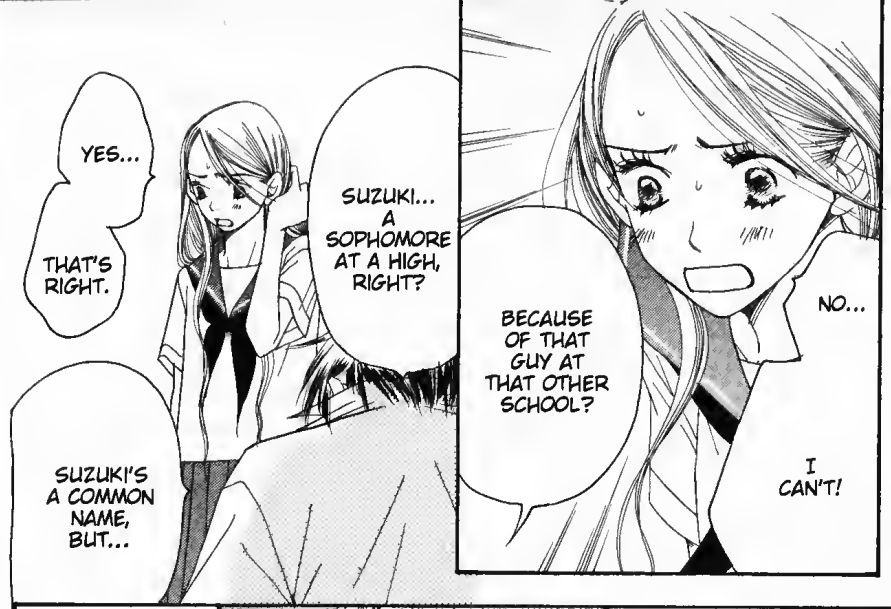
HUH?!
BO
W
I'M BEGGING YOU!!
WHAAAAAAAT?!
That boy from yesterday?
WHAT?!
GO OUT WITH YANAGIHARA !!
W-WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
Get up!
JUST GIVE HIM ONE CHANCE!!
YOU CAN ALWAYS DUMP HIM IF IT DOESN'T WORK OUT!
He's a good guy!

NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU TRY ...
...PERFECT ISN'T POSSIBLE IN THIS IMPERFECT WORLD.
PTTL
1-2
MIWA...
SHE THINKS MIWAKO'S GETTING UPPITY.
CHATTER
ANOTHER ADMIRER ?!
NAH, I DON'T THINK SO.
He looks mad!
Should we get a teacher?
CALL MIWAKO HEKUSA FOR ME.
R... Right away!!

THEN WHY DID YOU LIE?
I DON'T KNOW ...
I DIDN'T MEAN TO!
KLNCH

UM... GOOD POINT.
WHY ARE YOU SO UPSET?

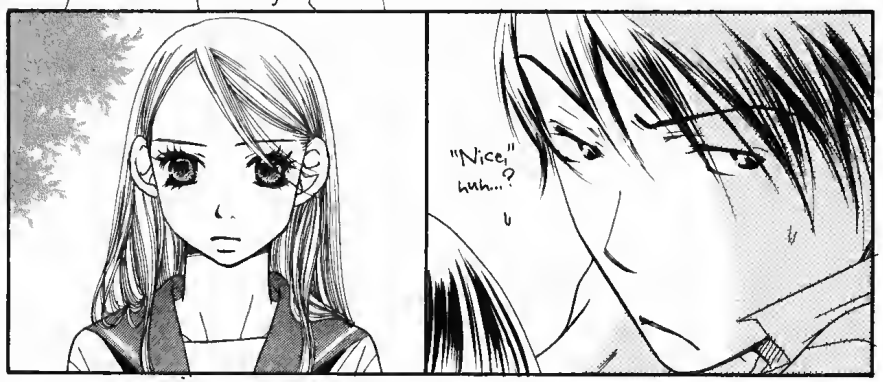

...BUT SOME-THING CAME UP.
WE WERE SUPPOSED TO WALK HOME TOGETHER THE OTHER DAY...
MTTR MTTR
Hmph! That jerk!
ERRAND BOY
SO I SENT YANAGIHARA TO THE MUSIC ROOM TO TELL HER.
I'M DATING KUROKAWA, A SOPHOMORE IN THE CHORUS.
He is?
WELL, BECAUSE... IT'S SORTA MY FAULT.


YES...
THAT'S RIGHT.
SUZUKI... A SOPHOMORE AT A HIGH, RIGHT?
SUZUKI'S A COMMON NAME, BUT...
BECAUSE OF THAT GUY AT THAT OTHER SCHOOL?
NO...
I CAN'T!

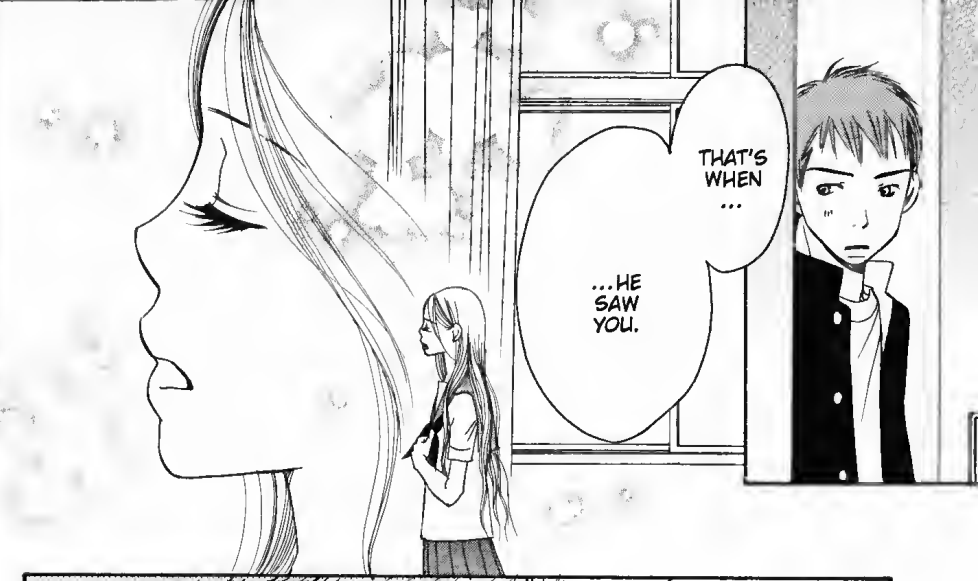
DO YOU...
...ENJOY TOYING WITH BOYS' FEELINGS?
...
...THERE'S NO...
...SUZUKI IN THAT CLASS.
PAT
I'M POSITIVE. I CHECKED WITH A FRIEND THERE.

DON'T PICK ON HER! SHE'S IN MY CLUB!
SHE'S NICE!
Ow...
YANK
C'mon, let's go!

IS HE PESTERING YOU ABOUT YANAGIHARA?
IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS, NAGATA!
Ouch!
SORRY, MIWAKO. HE'S A PROBLEM CHILD!


"Nice," huh...?

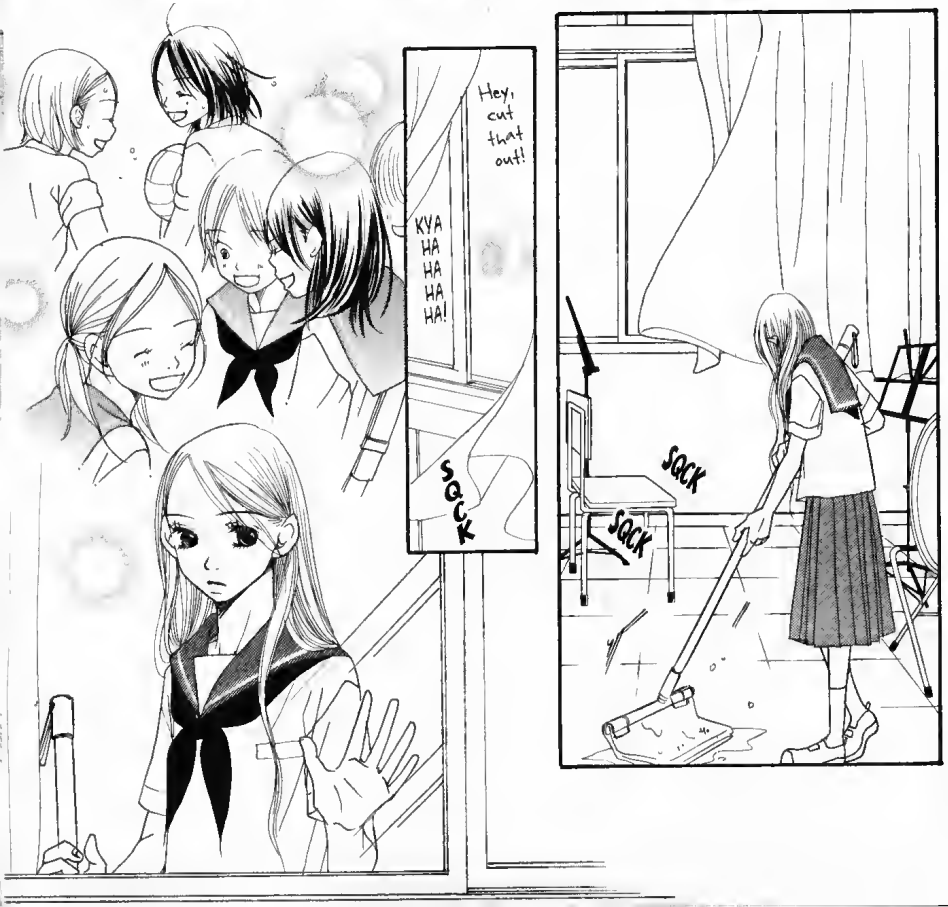
NOT AS NICE AS YOU THINK!

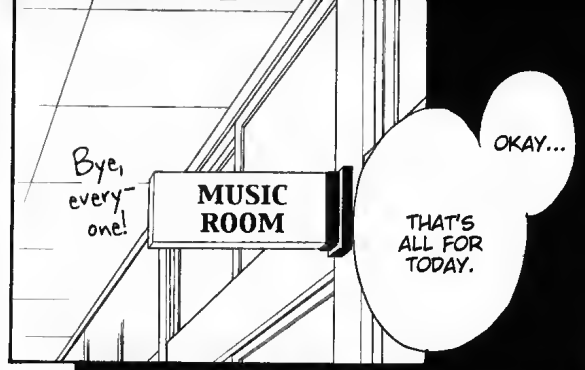

THAT'S WHEN ...
...HE SAW YOU.

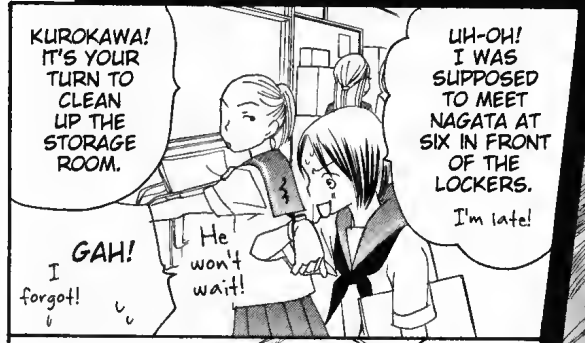
I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT HE SEES IN YOU...
...BUT HE FELL FOR YOU HARD.

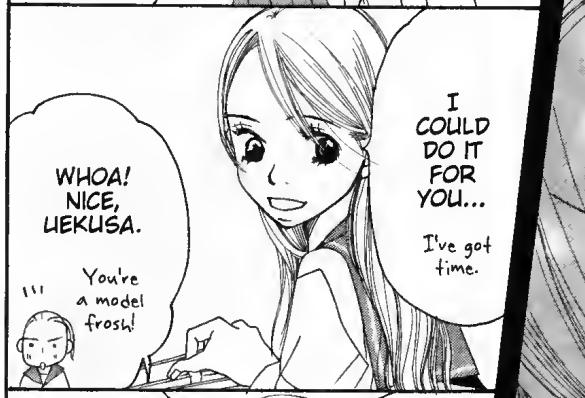
KURO-KAWA?
Hi....
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
A freshman told me something was up.

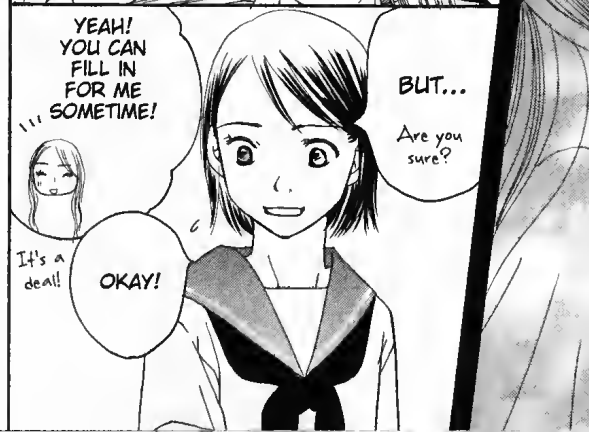
NAGATA!
I speak for all men!
THE POINT IS— YOU SHOULDN'T STOMP ON A GUY'S HEART!
m m m


Hey, cut that out!
KYA HA HA HA HA!
SQCK
SQCK
SQCK

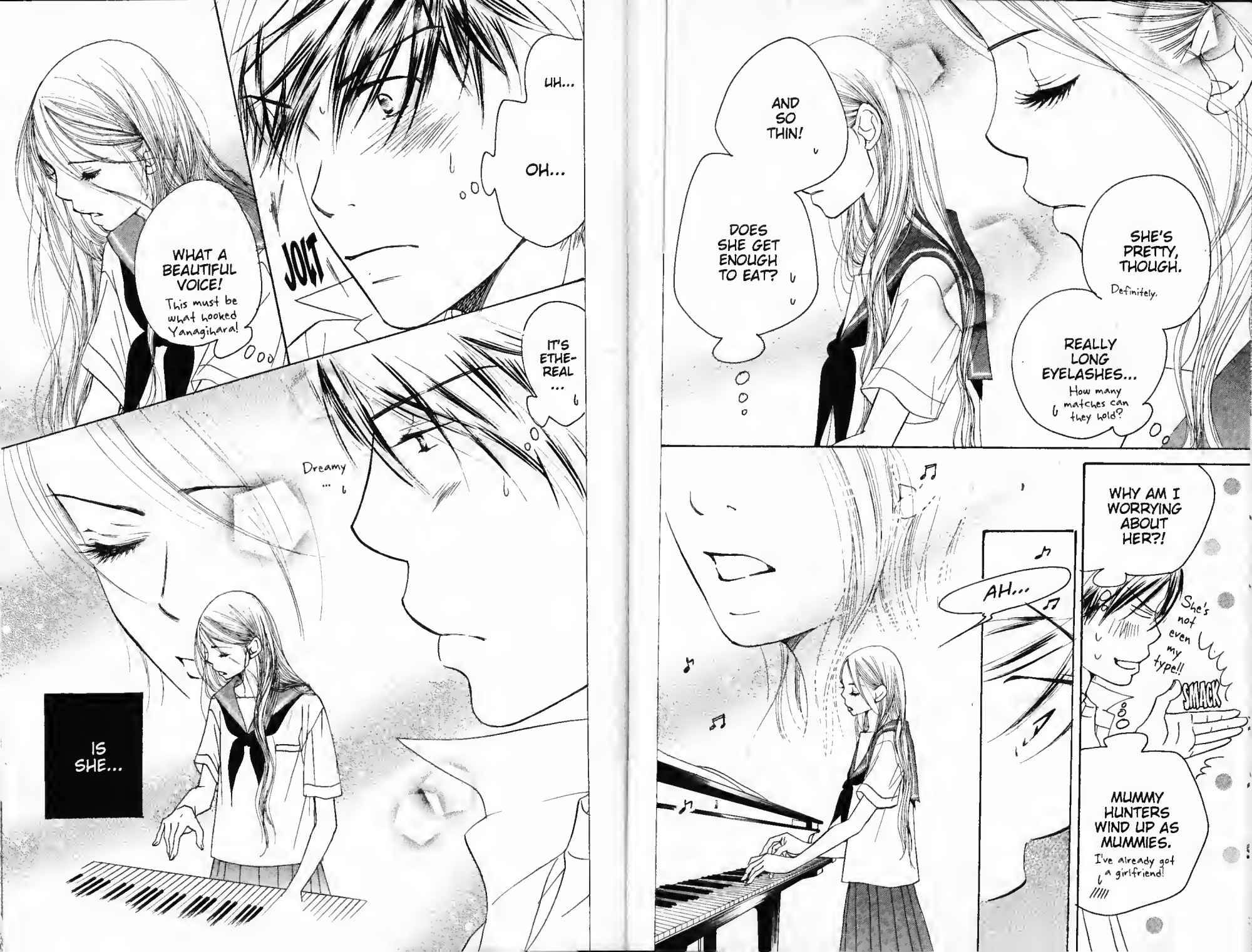

Bye, every-one!
MUSIC ROOM
OKAY... THAT'S ALL FOR TODAY.


KUROKAWA! IT'S YOUR TURN TO CLEAN UP THE STORAGE ROOM.
GAH! I forgot!
He won't wait!
UH-OH! I WAS SUPPOSED TO MEET NAGATA AT SIX IN FRONT OF THE LOCKERS.
I'm late!


WHOA! NICE, UEKUSA.
You're a model frosh!
I COULD DO IT FOR YOU...
I've got time.


YEAH! YOU CAN FILL IN FOR ME SOMETIME!
It's a deal!
OKAY!
BUT...
Are you sure?

NOT AS NICE AS YOU THINK!
DON'T YOU REALIZE ...
...I KNOW THAT?
PLI2222
NNKK.
SHE'S LATE!
MTTR MTTR
PLNK PLNK
I TOLD HER AT SIX IN FRONT OF THE LOCKERS ...
←WON'T STAY PUT
WAIT A SEC... WHY AM I HIDING?
I'm such an idiot!
PLNK PLNK
NO... THAT'S NOT RIGHT ...
PLNK
HUH? I MESSED UP AGAIN.
It's awful!
...
HER PLAYING STINKS ...
Oh that's it!
...
HMM...
ARGH!
IT'S HER AGAIN!
SHMP
PLNK PLNK PLNK


AND SO THIN!
DOES SHE GET ENOUGH TO EAT?
SHE'S PRETTY, THOUGH.
Definitely.
REALLY LONG EYELASHES...
How many matches can they hold?
WHY AM I WORRYING ABOUT HER?!
She's not even my type!!
SMACK!
MUMMY HUNTERS WIND UP AS MUMMIES.
I've already got a girlfriend!
AH...
UH...
OH...
JOLT
WHAT A BEAUTIFUL VOICE!
This must be what hooked Yanagihara!
IT'S ETHE-REAL ...
Dreamy ...
IS SHE...

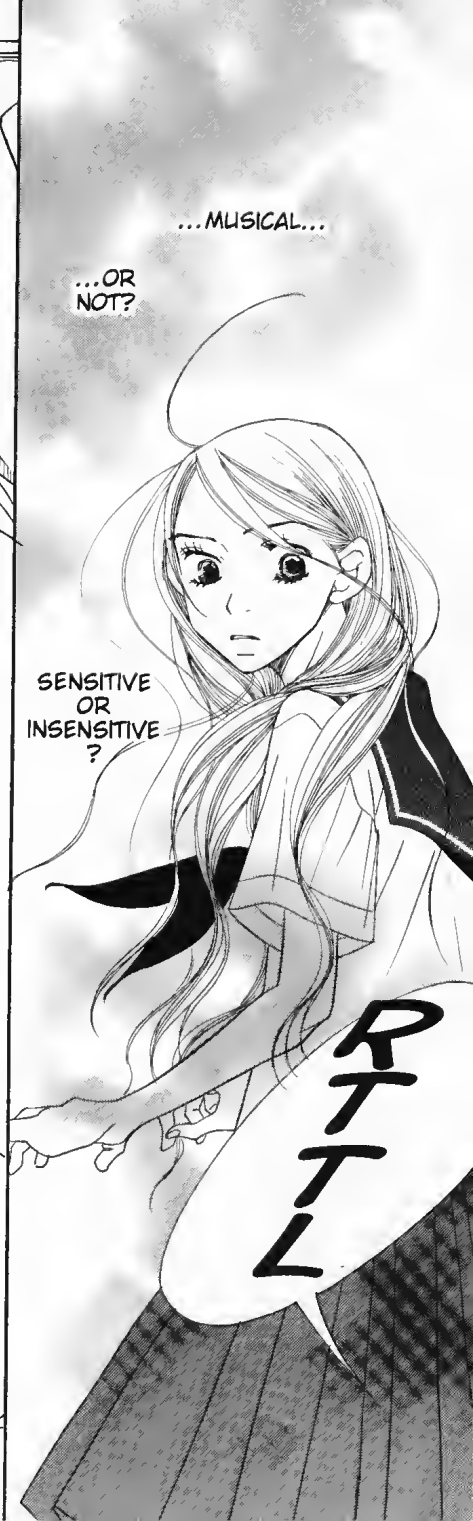
HUH?
I KNOW THAT SONG ...
IT'S "CANARY" BY YASO SAIJO. A LULLABY, RIGHT?
...YOU WERE PLAYING.
...
HE SAW ME PLAYING ...

OH, THAT'S RIGHT!
"SHOULD WE BEAT IT WITH A WILLOW SWITCH?"
"THE CANARY FORGOT HOW TO SING. SHOULD WE ABANDON IT ON THE MOUNTAIN? NO, NO, WE MUSTN'T. SHOULD WE BURY IT UNDER A BUSH BEHIND THE HOUSE? NO, NO, WE MUSTN'T."
THE LYRICS ARE WEIRD.
He's way off-key...
...HOW DID THE REST GO?
WAIT ...
PRETTY MEAN, HUH?
It scared me when I was little.
BUT THERE'S MORE.
IT ENDS...
...WITH A NOTE OF HOPE.

...
AGH!!
You startled me!!

I'M JUST LOOKING FOR KURO-KAWA.
HOW LONG WERE YOU LISTENING ...?
Don't freak out.

I CAN SEE THAT.
Missed each other.
SHE LEFT A WHILE AGO.


...MUSICAL...
...OR NOT?
SENSITIVE OR INSENSITIVE ?
RTTL

"I'M DELICATE, SO TREAT ME WITH CARE."
IS THAT YOUR POINT?
IS THIS HOW YOU SEDUCE GUYS?

ARE YOU GOING TO REVEAL YOUR TRUE FORM NOW?!
BRING IT ON! HYAAH!
WAP
SHE-DEVIL LASER BEAM !!
WHAT'S HIS PROBLEM?
NO!
YOU'RE READING TOO MUCH INTO IT!

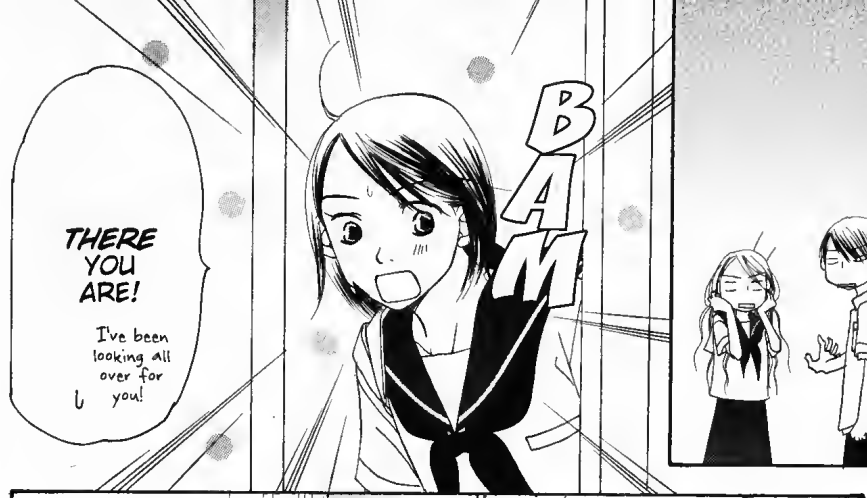
"THE CANARY FORGOT HOW TO SING...
"LAUNCH IT ONTO THE SEA ON A MOONLIT NIGHT...
"ON AN IVORY BOAT WITH A SILVER PADDLE... AND THE CANARY WILL REMEMBER HER SONG."

GRAB
OW!
I DIDN'T MEAN IT?
SORRY!
OH! WHAT AM I DOING?!
WAP
THAT HURT!
HUH?
PTTR PTTR PTTR
NAGATAAAAA!
Uh-oh...

DON'T EVER TALK TO ME AGAIN.
THIS ISN'T FUN FOR ME, EITHER.
IF YOU HATE ME SO MUCH...
...LEAVE ME ALONE.

...DID I JUST LIE?
...AM I HIDING?

...she said...
And then..


BAM
THERE YOU ARE!
I've been looking all over for you!

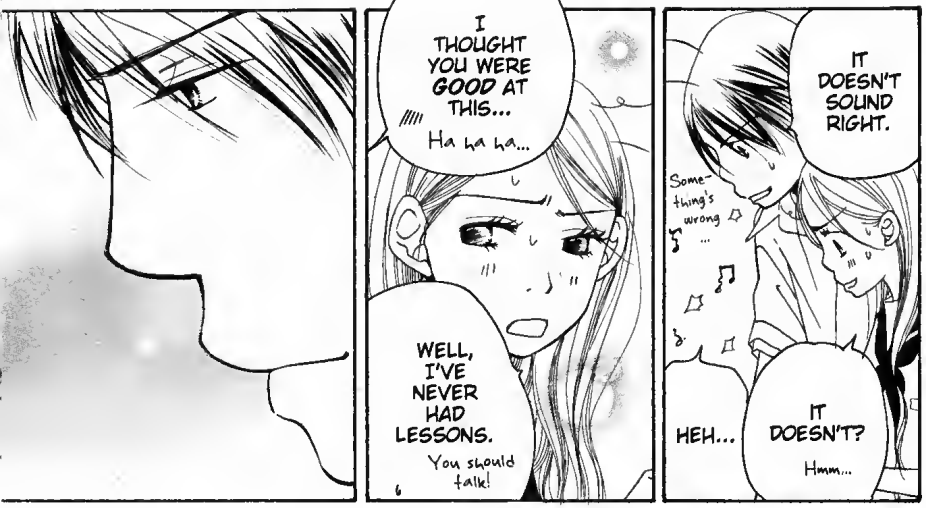
NOPE.
JUST ME.
IS MIWAKO HERE?
Thought I heard her voice.

GLANCE
WHY...
Is she in the rest-room?
REALLY?
GRAB
FORGET ABOUT IT. LET'S GO.
Come on!

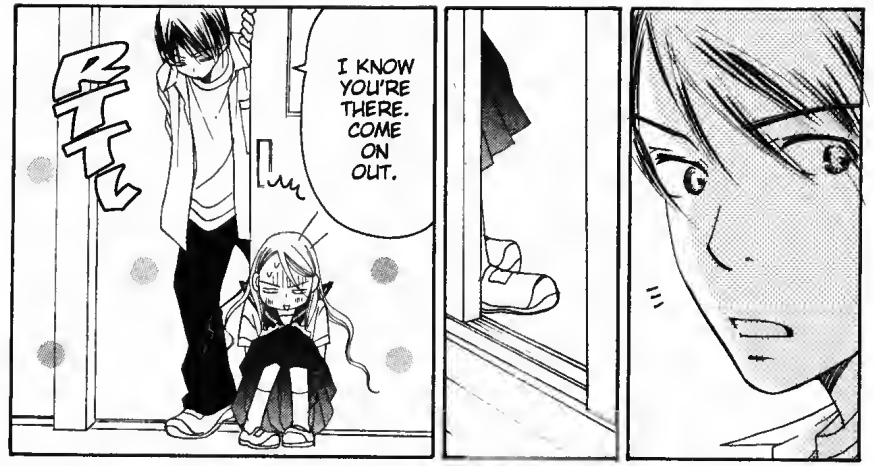
BUT MY EYES FOLLOW HIM...
...WHER-EVER HE GOES.
KLK
KLK
I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT...
KLK
...EVERY WORD HE SAYS... EVERY LOOK ON HIS FACE.

I HATE THAT GUY.
FWUFF

IF THAT'S LOVE...
...THEN MIWAKO ...
...HAD FALLEN IN LOVE.
PINNG
WHAT'S HE DOING HERE?!
I'm in the bathroom!
PLNK
I CAN'T GET TO MY BAG!
STAYED AFTER SCHOOL.
...
?
With just one finger?
WHAT'S HE PLAYING...?
I can't tell...
IT'S "CANARY."
OH!


I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOOD AT THIS...
Ha ha ha...
WELL, I'VE NEVER HAD LESSONS.
You should talk!
IT DOESN'T SOUND RIGHT.
Something's wrong...
HEH...
IT DOESN'T?
Hmm...

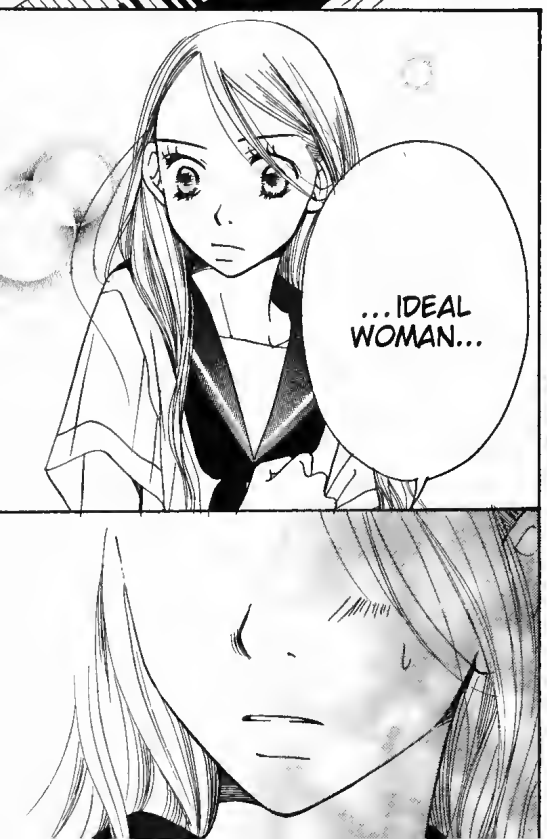
SING FOR ME.
BUT...
...YOU DO SING NICE.


I KNOW YOU'RE THERE. COME ON OUT.

GRAB
TMP TMP TMP TMP TMP

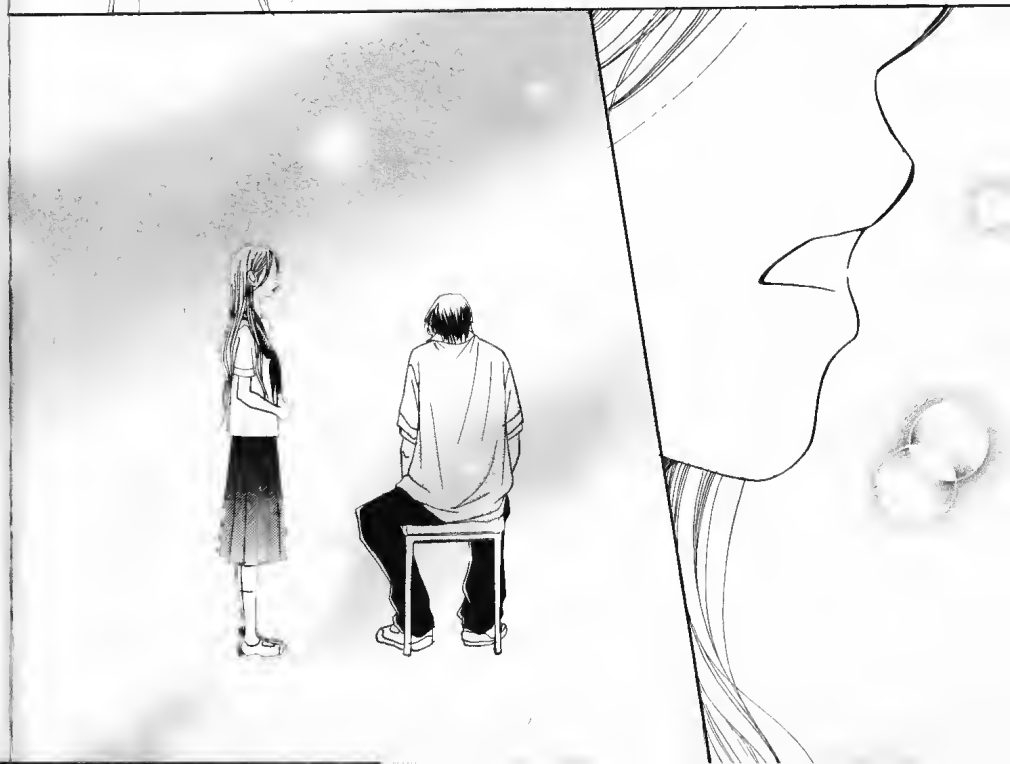
HOW DOES IT START?
ACK
YANK
HOLD ON A SEC!
OH! I GET IT NOW...
HM?
PLNK
LIKE THIS!

AAAAGH!
WHAMM
BONG


...IDEAL WOMAN...

You're so weird!!
I don't get you at all!!!
W-WHAT THE—?!
MY...

NO.
FWP
YOU'RE IN THE SCHOOL CHORUS, AREN'T YOU? COME ON!
WOULD IT HELP IF I CLOSED MY EYES?
"Mmph"
...?
MMPH!!



...THE TRUTH IS...
I JUST DON'T WANT TO GET HURT.
SO I TRY NOT TO HURT OTHERS.
YOU MIGHT NOT BELIEVE ME, BUT...
THAT MIGHT SOUND PHONY...
...BUT IT'S THE TRUTH.
I'M NOT FALLING FOR YOU.

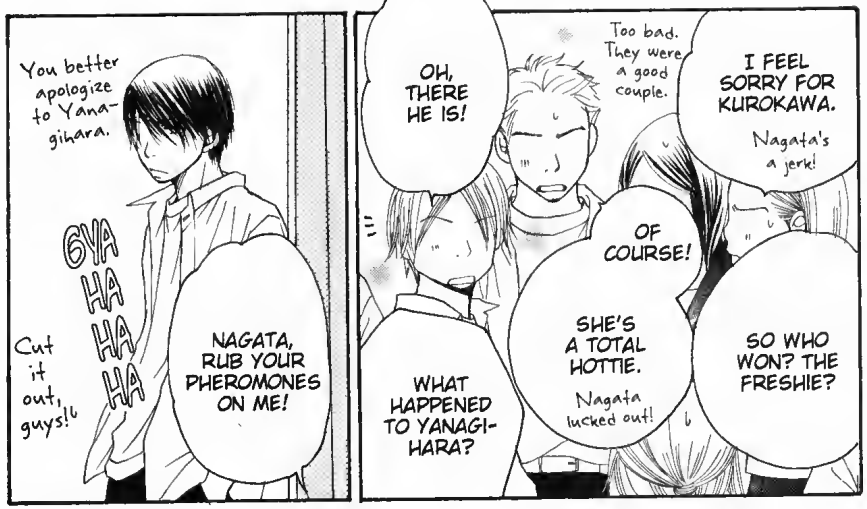
THAT'S MY TYPE.
AND KUROKAWA IS PRETTY CLOSE TO IT.
...IS SINCERE... CUTE...
...CHEERFUL AND SMART.
SOMEONE WHO'D...
...MAKE A GOOD MOM SOMEDAY.
FOR A LONG TIME...
...I WANTED TO BE THAT GIRL.
I...
...THINK ...
...EVERY GIRL SHOULD BE LIKE THAT.

I'M...
...GOING TO BREAK UP WITH KUROKAWA.
WHAT?
HOW COULD YOU—?
I CAN'T BE WITH HER AND FEEL LIKE THIS!!
GRAB
DON'T!
DON'T DO IT!!
STOP!

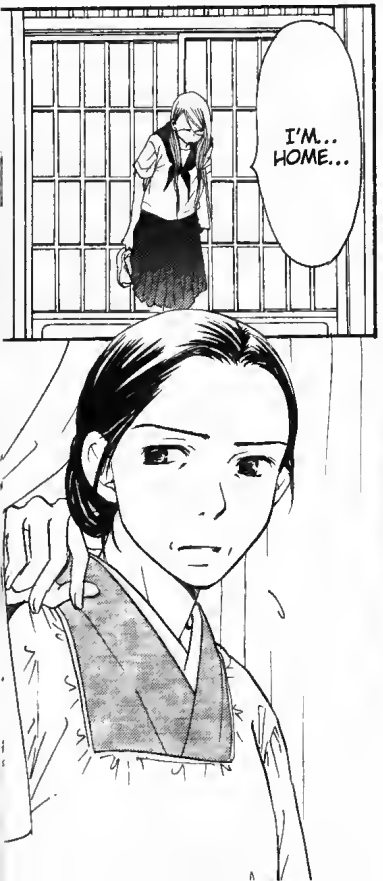
I KNOW.
BUT I CAN'T GET YOUR VOICE OUT OF MY HEAD.
WHY DO I FEEL LIKE THIS?!

WHAT ...?!
MIWAKO DID WHAT?!
NO WAY.
THAT'S JUST GOSSIP.
ARE YOU SURE? THAT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE HER.
BUT THE OTHER GIRLS IN CHORUS SAW HER!
...DO YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THIS?
Really?
No way!
HIROKO ...
BONG
BONG
BONG

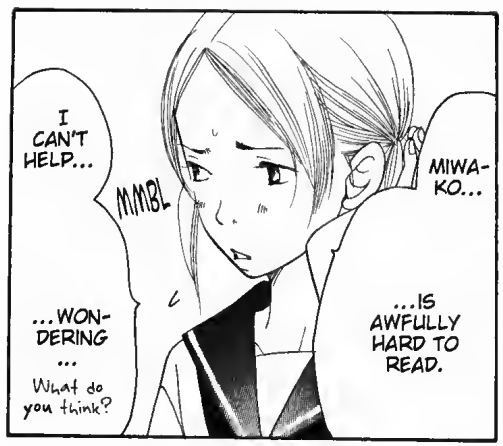
FLUMP
NO...

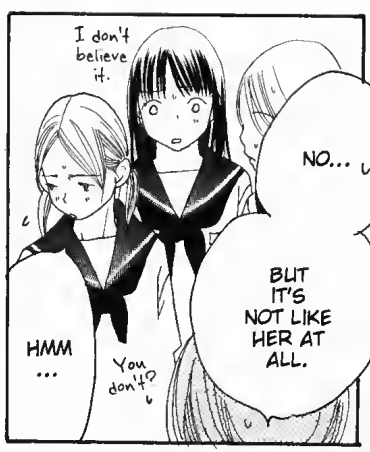

You better apologize to Yanagihara.
GYA HA HA HA
Cut it out, guys!
NAGATA, RUB YOUR PHEROMONES ON ME!

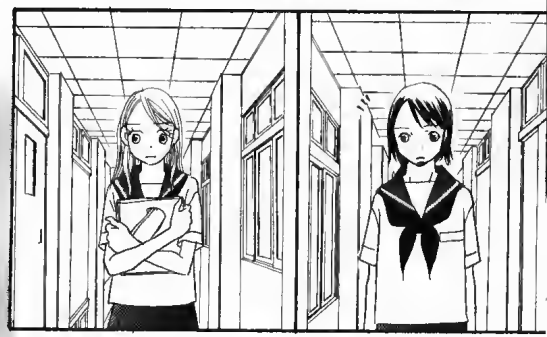
OH, THERE HE IS!
Too bad. They were a good couple.
I FEEL SORRY FOR KUROKAWA.
Nagata's a jerk!
OF COURSE!
SHE'S A TOTAL HOTTIE.
Nagata lucked out!
WHAT HAPPENED TO YANAGIHARA?
SO WHO WON? THE FRESHIE?

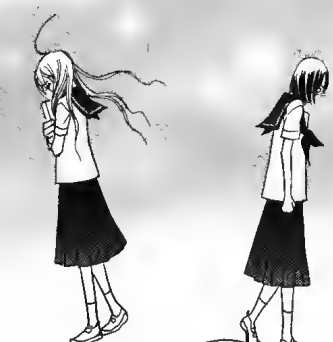

I'M.. HOME...

HOW STUPID ARE YOU?! THE QUIET ONES ARE THE WORST!
Huh?! I heard that was totally one-sided!
DOESN'T SHE HAVE A BOYFRIEND AT A HIGH?
NO WAAAY !!
AND TO THINK I KINDA LIKED HER!
Sure had me fooled!
OOH! SO THEY'RE BOTH CHEATING ?!

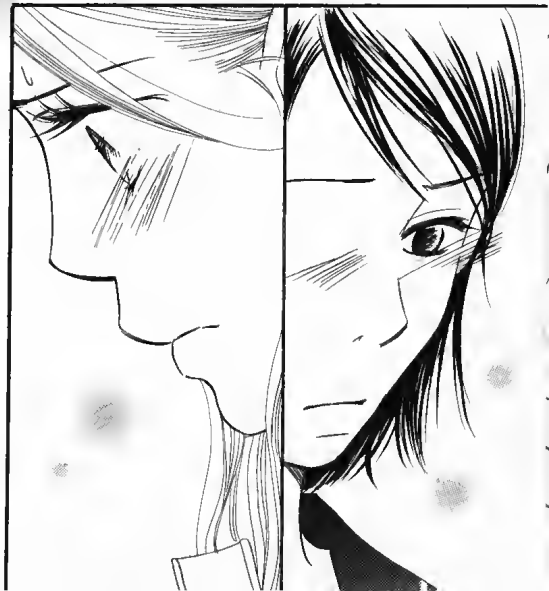

I CAN'T HELP...
MMBL
...WONDERING...
What do you think?
MIWAKO...
...IS AWFULLY HARD TO READ.


I don't believe it.
NO... U
BUT IT'S NOT LIKE HER AT ALL.
HMM ...
You don't?





DID YOU SEE THAT?!
THIS COULD GET UGLY.



OFF TO SCHOOL?
HAVE A NICE DAY!!
OH! HELLO, MIWAKO!
YES, BUT SHE'S AWFULLY PRETTY.
Men just won't leave her alone.
AH HA HA!
Unlike my daughter.
1-2
WHAT?!
IS THAT TRUE?!
WHAT'S MORE, THEY SAY THAT WHEN SHE WAS YOUNGER...
WHISPER
BOW
Take care!
THANKS.

MIWAKO?
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN AT SCHOOL?
REALLY?
OUR NEIGHBOR MIWAKO ...?!!
MIWAKO IS DATING SEVERAL BOYS AT ONCE.
MY YOUNGEST DAUGHTER GOES TO THE SAME SCHOOL.
SHE DOESN'T SEEM LIKE THE TYPE.
Looks so innocent!
OH, REALLY?!
THAT WOMAN ...
...LOVES TO SPREAD RUMORS.
WHY DO YOU ASK?
DID OUR NEIGHBOR SAY SOMETHING?
OH, NO REASON ...

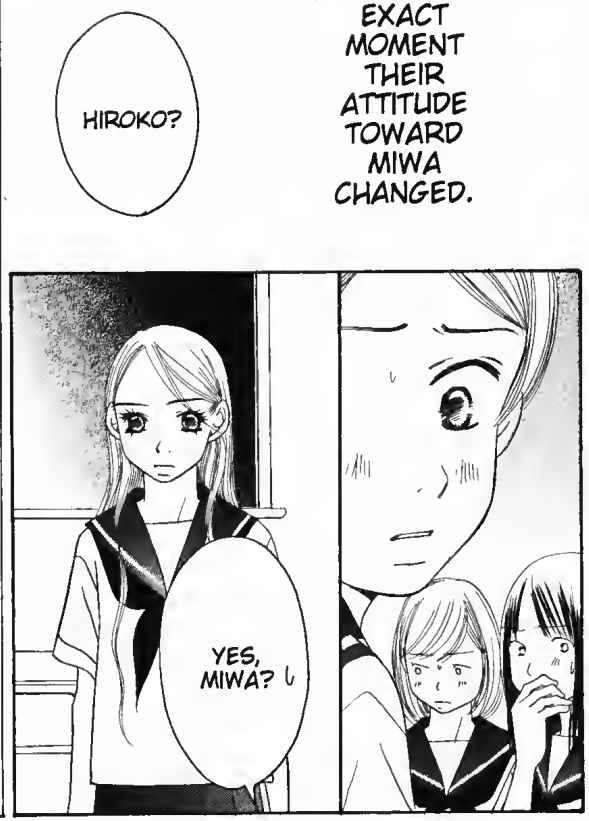
"Canary"

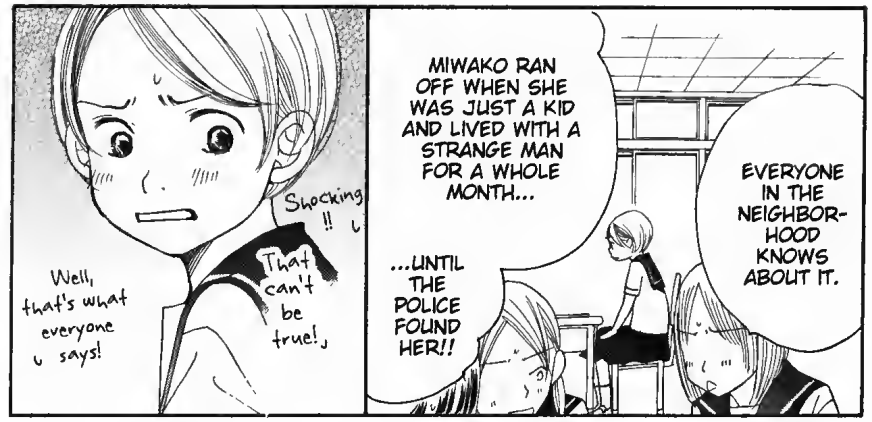
I wanted to use the title "Canary" in the main series, but I didn't get the chance, so it ended up in this bonus episode... I hadn't written a stand-alone story for a long time, so it was fun.

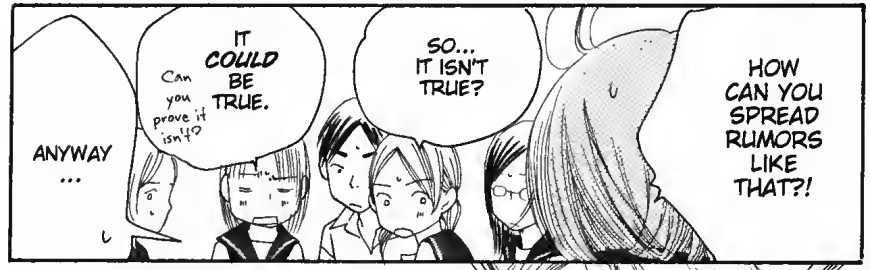
A friend of mine couldn't remember what Yaso Saijo's song "Canary" sounded like and asked me to sing it. When I obliged, my friend said I was off-key... It's a hard song to sing! Or am I just tone-deaf...?

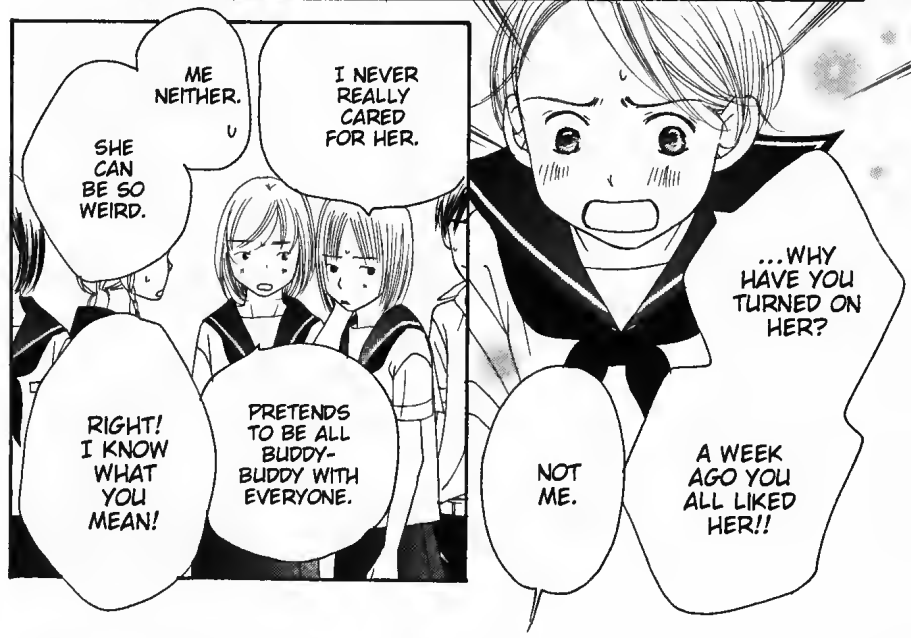
I considered making Shizuyo Tsukishima the main character, but I knew that would make it like a soap opera, so I gave that up.

Our heroine

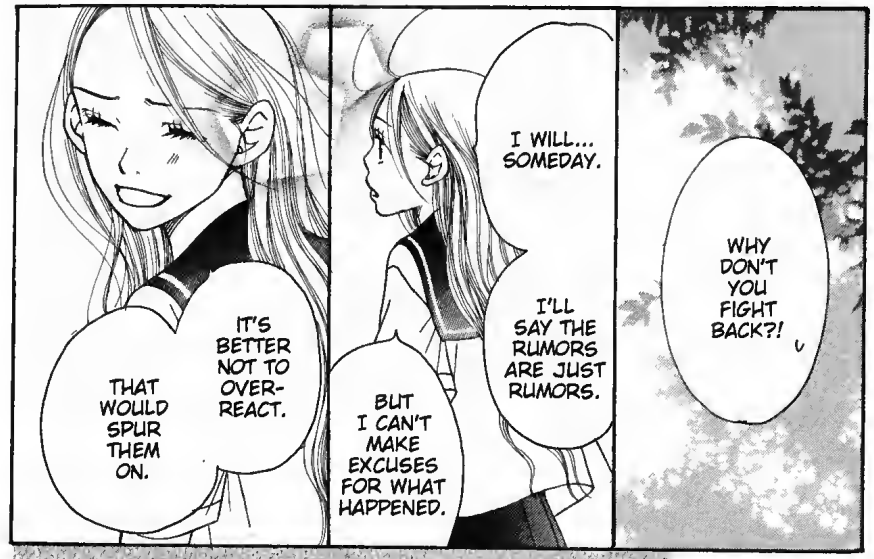



Well, that's what everyone says!
Shocking!!
That can't be true!
MIWAKO RAN OFF WHEN SHE WAS JUST A KID AND LIVED WITH A STRANGE MAN FOR A WHOLE MONTH...
...UNTIL THE POLICE FOUND HER!!
EVERYONE IN THE NEIGHBOR-HOOD KNOWS ABOUT IT.




SHE CAN BE SO WEIRD.
ME NEITHER.
I NEVER REALLY CARED FOR HER.
RIGHT! I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN!
PRETENDS TO BE ALL BUDDY-BUDDY WITH EVERYONE.
NOT ME.
...WHY HAVE YOU TURNED ON HER?
A WEEK AGO YOU ALL LIKED HER!!

IF YOU LIKE HIM...
...DON'T WORRY ABOUT HOW IT LOOKS TO ANYONE ELSE.
I WOULDN'T IF I WERE YOU!
I CAN'T HELP IT.
IT'S...
...TOO MUCH FOR ME.


WHY DON'T YOU FIGHT BACK?!
I WILL... SOMEDAY.
I'LL SAY THE RUMORS ARE JUST RUMORS.
BUT I CAN'T MAKE EXCUSES FOR WHAT HAPPENED.
IT'S BETTER NOT TO OVER-REACT.
THAT WOULD SPUR THEM ON.

KRMPL
I REALLY DID MESS UP.
NOW I HAVE TO START ALL OVER AGAIN.
NOTHING IS WORSE THAN BEING JUDGED BY OTHERS.
AT LEAST, NOT TO MIWA.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT NAGATA?

Do you have homework for your classical Japanese class?
I can help you, if you want!
Okay, thanks.

BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER.
I DON'T LIKE HIM VERY MUCH ANYWAY.
LATER...
...MIWA KEPT REJECTING HIM.
MIWAKO!
...EVEN AFTER THE START OF THE NEW TERM...
...AND AFTER NAGATA BROKE UP WITH KUROKAWA...
2-2
GOOD MORNING!

BY THE TIME NAGATA GRADUATED ...

...THE NASTY RUMORS ABOUT THE TWO OF THEM HAD DIED DOWN.

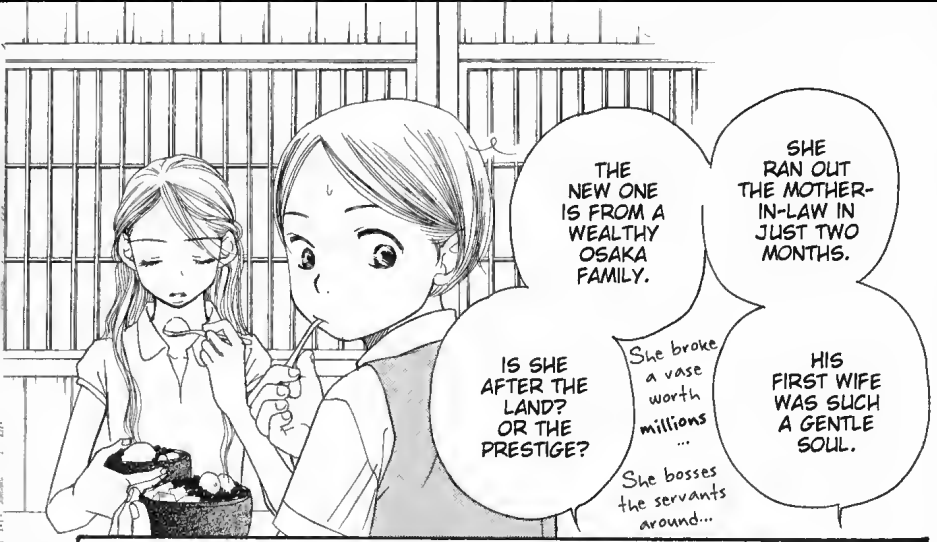
PUFF
PUFF
PUFF
MRS. UEKUSA...
...PLEASE LET MIWAKO GO TO TOKYO!
GRINCE
GRINCE
I DON'T THINK...
...THIS IS THE RIGHT PLACE FOR HER.
DID MIWAKO PUT YOU UP TO THIS, HIROKO?
NO. I CAME ON MY OWN.
You're very brave.
I heard you wouldn't let her go.

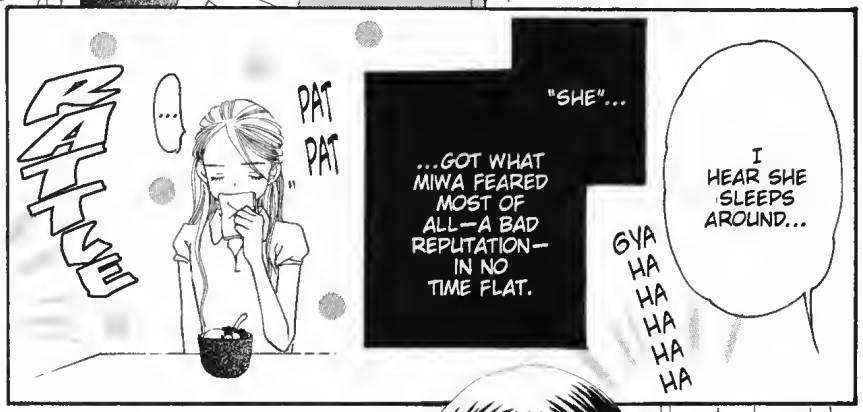
WHAT WAS IT THAT MIWAKO...
...SACRIFICED LOVE TO PROTECT?

FWOOM
THEN ONE DAY ...
...A TEMPEST SWIRLED INTO TOWN.
JUMP
DOOM
Yes, Miss!

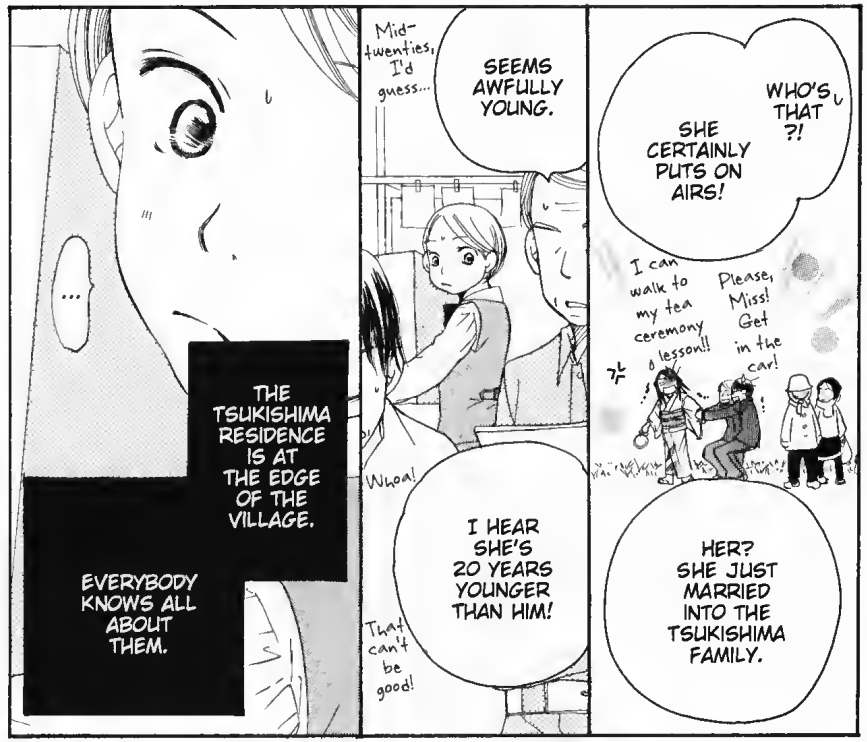
SHE WANTS SO BADLY TO BE... PERFECT.
...LIFE WILL BE HARD FOR HER WHEREVER SHE IS?
...BUT DON'T YOU THINK...
MY DAUGHTER BLAMES THIS VILLAGE FOR HER PROBLEMS ...

...MIWAKO WENT TO A LOCAL JUNIOR COLLEGE.
AND I GOT A JOB AT A DELIVERY SERVICE BASED IN MIWA'S NEIGHBOR-HOOD.
Coming!
Hiroko! Tea, please!
...I CAN'T HELP THINKING, IF SHE STAYS NEARBY, I COULD KEEP AN EYE ON HER.
PERHAPS IT'S JUST A MOTHER'S FOOLISH-NESS, BUT...
IN THE END...

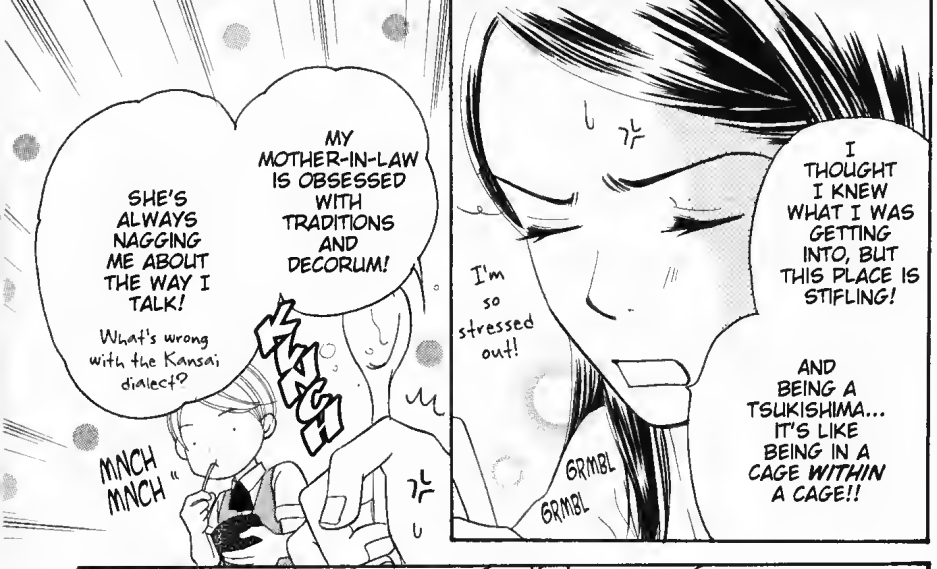

THE NEW ONE IS FROM A WEALTHY OSAKA FAMILY.
SHE RAN OUT THE MOTHER-IN-LAW IN JUST TWO MONTHS.
IS SHE AFTER THE LAND? OR THE PRESTIGE?
She broke a vase worth millions ...
She bosses the servants around...
HIS FIRST WIFE WAS SUCH A GENTLE SOUL.


RATTLE
...
PAT PAT
"SHE"...
...GOT WHAT MIWA FEARED MOST OF ALL—A BAD REPUTATION—IN NO TIME FLAT.
I HEAR SHE SLEEPS AROUND...
GYA HA HA HA HA HA

WHOA
No air conditioning ?!
Yikes! It's the lady of the manor!
FWAP FWAP
WHAT A SHABBY SHOP!

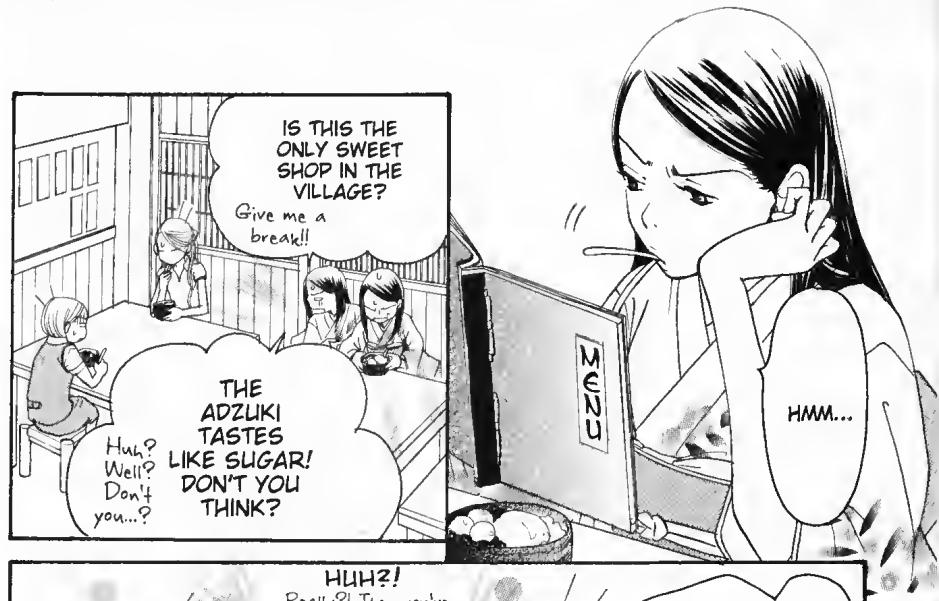

...
THE TSUKISHIMA RESIDENCE IS AT THE EDGE OF THE VILLAGE.
EVERYBODY KNOWS ALL ABOUT THEM.
Mid-twenties, I'd guess...
SEEMS AWFULLY YOUNG.
Whoa!
I HEAR SHE'S 20 YEARS YOUNGER THAN HIM!
That can't be good!
WHO'S THAT ?!
SHE CERTAINLY PUTS ON AIRS!
I can walk to my tea ceremony lesson!!
Please, Miss! Get in the car!
HER? SHE JUST MARRIED INTO THE TSUKISHIMA FAMILY.

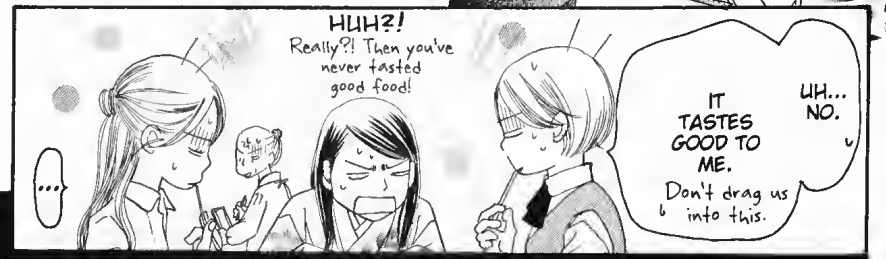
THEY ESPECIALLY LOVE THE FAMILY SCANDALS.
I HEAR THE NEW DAUGHTER-IN-LAW IS TERRIBLY SELFISH!
THE SQUARE FOOTAGE OF THEIR PROPERTY ...
THEIR INCOME AND ASSETS...

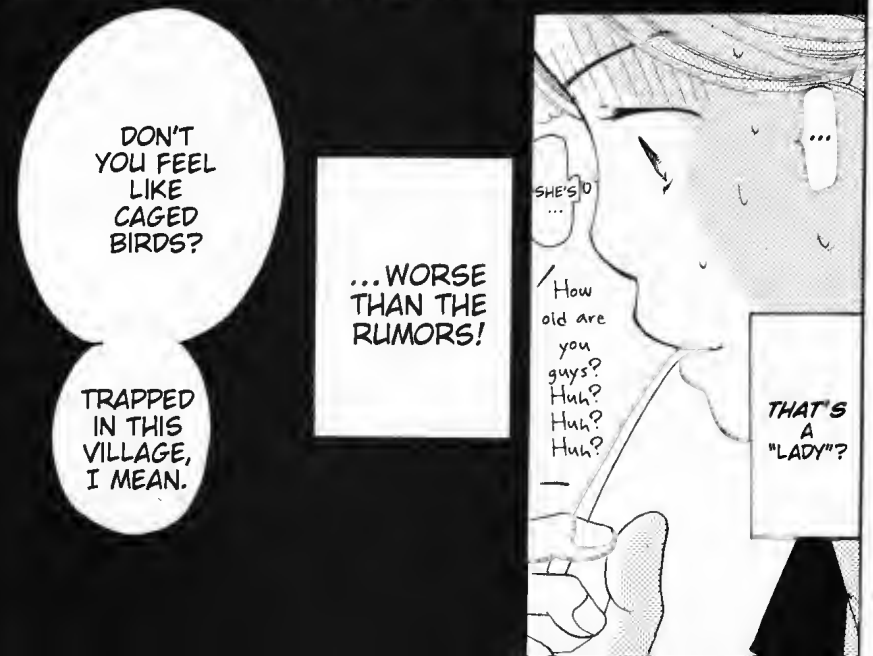

I THOUGHT I KNEW WHAT I WAS GETTING INTO, BUT THIS PLACE IS STIFLING!
AND BEING A TSUKISHIMA... IT'S LIKE BEING IN A CAGE *WITHIN* A CAGE!!
I'm so stressed out!
GRMBL GRMBL
MY MOTHER-IN-LAW IS OBSESSED WITH TRADITIONS AND DECORUM!
SHE'S ALWAYS NAGGING ME ABOUT THE WAY I TALK!
What's wrong with the Kansai dialect?
KYUU
MNCH MNCH "

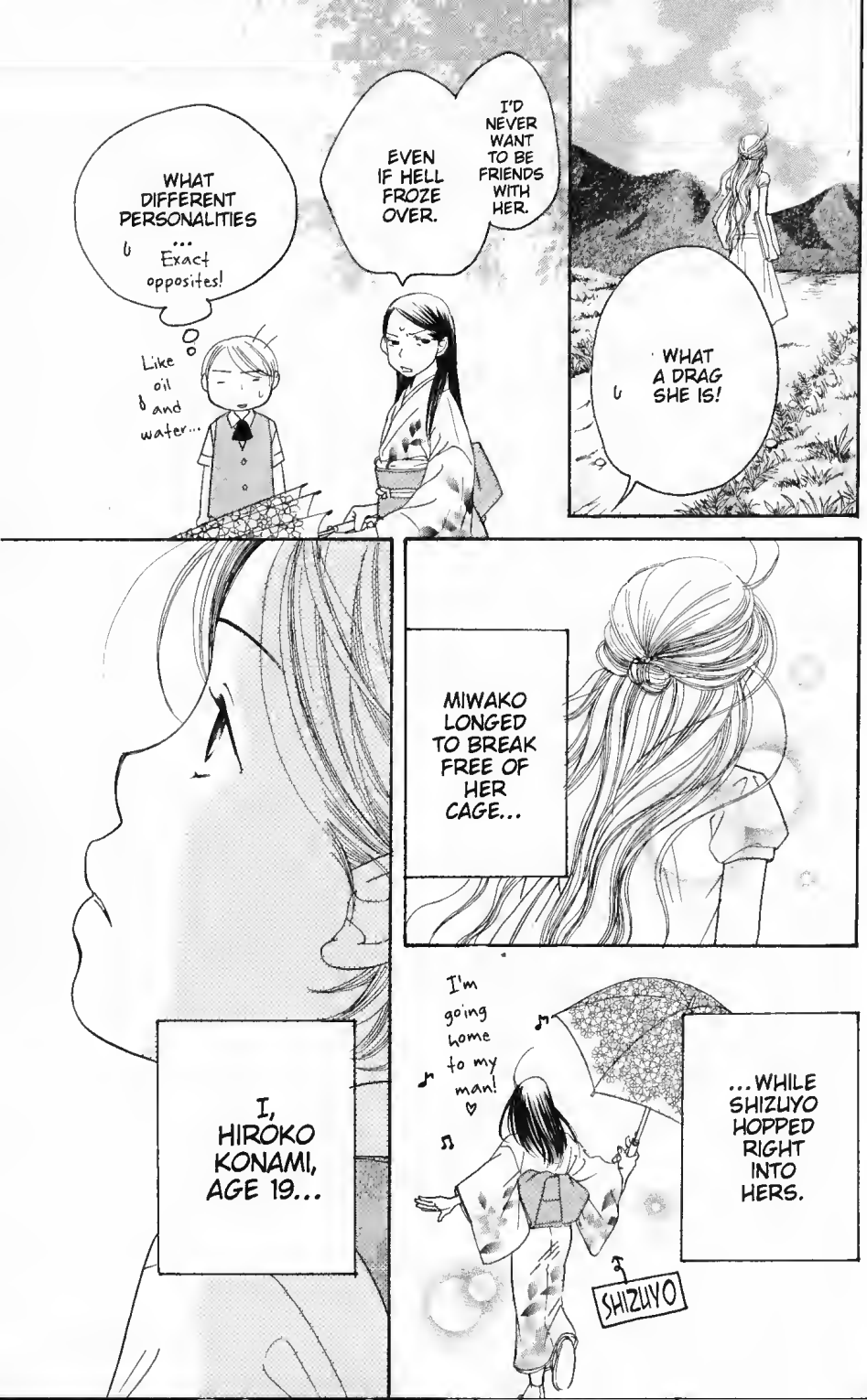
MAYBE IT'S NOT THE DIALECT... BUT *WHAT* YOU SAY...
WARMING UP TO HER
People might misunderstand you.
MNCH MNCH "
YOU SHOOT FROM THE HIP.
I like that!

WHY'D YOU MARRY SOMEONE FROM SHIMANE?
You'd fit in better in Osaka.
"
THAT'S SIMPLE...
I FELL IN LOVE WITH MY HUSBAND.
IT WAS AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE, AND HE'S 15 YEARS OLDER THAN ME...
...BUT I KNEW RIGHT AWAY HE WAS *THE ONE*.
HE'S A RARE FIND. A REALLY MACHO GUY.

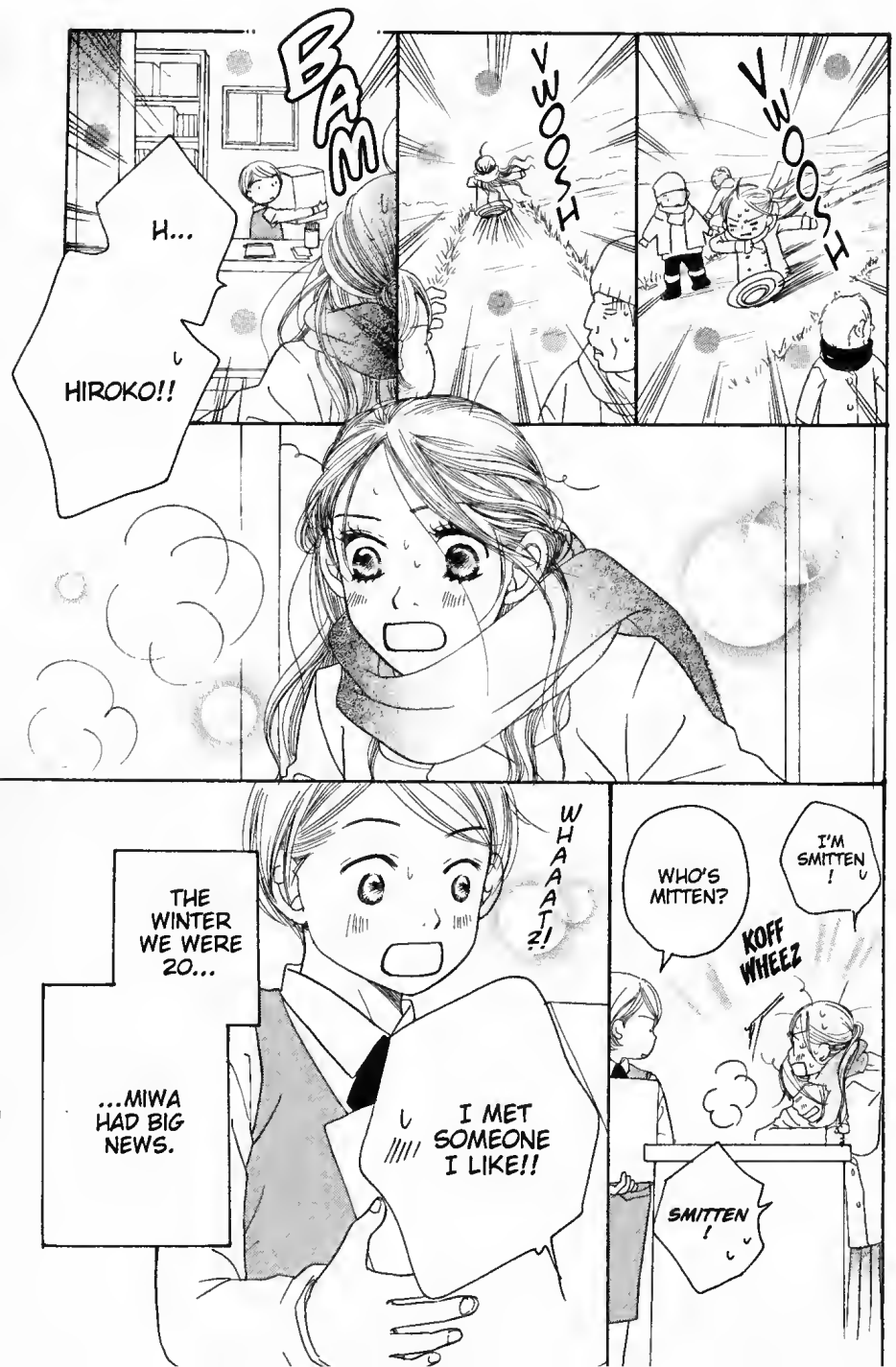

HMM...
MENU
IS THIS THE ONLY SWEET SHOP IN THE VILLAGE?
Give me a break!!
THE ADZUKI TASTES LIKE SUGAR! DON'T YOU THINK?
Huh? Well? Don't you...?


UH... NO.
IT TASTES GOOD TO ME.
Don't drag us into this.
HUH?!
Really?! Then you've never tasted good food!
...


DON'T YOU FEEL LIKE CAGED BIRDS?
TRAPPED IN THIS VILLAGE, I MEAN.
...WORSE THAN THE RUMORS!
...
SHE'S...
How old are you guys? Huh? Huh? Huh?
THAT'S A "LADY"?


WHAT DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES... Exact opposites!
Like oil and water...
EVEN IF HELL FROZE OVER.
I'D NEVER WANT TO BE FRIENDS WITH HER.
WHAT A DRAG SHE IS!
MIWAKO LONGED TO BREAK FREE OF HER CAGE...
I, HIROKO KONAMI, AGE 19...
I'm going home to my man!
SHIZUYO
...WHILE SHIZUYO HOPPED RIGHT INTO HERS.

MAYBE IT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS, BUT...
CHITR CHITR
Of course!
An heir? You mean...! a boy?
I'm younger, so...
HIS FIRST WIFE GOT THE BOOT BECAUSE SHE COULDN'T HAVE KIDS.
Later, toots!
NOW IT'S UP TO ME TO BEAR HIM AN HEIR.
PST
PST
THAT KIND OF ADVICE IS FOR WEAK-LINGS.
YOU'RE JUST ASKING FOR TROUBLE.
...I DON'T CARE...
...WHAT ANYONE ELSE THINKS.
AS LONG AS MY HUSBAND LOVES ME ...
...IF YOU WANT TO GET ALONG AROUND HERE, YOU SHOULD WATCH WHAT YOU SAY.
EVEN MORE SO IF YOU FEEL TRAPPED.


BAM
H...
HIROKO!!
VWOOSH
VWOOSH
THE WINTER WE WERE 20...
...MIWA HAD BIG NEWS.
I MET SOMEONE I LIKE!!
WHAAAT?!
WHO'S MITTEN?
I'M SMITTEN!
KOFF WHEEZ
SMITTEN!

...HAVE NEVER CONSIDERED THIS VILLAGE A CAGE.
I'M JUST AN ORDINARY GIRL.
I work for a delivery company...
I'm looking for a boyfriend...
I'm gonna start my diet tomorrow...
Sure!
It's thinner than your legs!
Would you like a radish, Hiro?
Hey! What was that crack about my legs?!

HIROKO ...
I HOPE YOU FIND HAPPINESS TOO.
MIWAKO FLEW OUT OF HER CAGE.
KLIK
KLAK
FLYYYY
RIING

HE'S A STUDENT FROM TOKYO...
HIS CAR BROKE DOWN NEARBY... AND I HELPED HIM!
HE SEEMS A LITTLE DREAMY, BUT HE'S REALLY NICE!
ACTUALLY... HE'S A LITTLE LIKE YOU, HIROKO!
WHEN HE GRADUATES FROM COLLEGE...
...WE'RE GOING TO LIVE TOGETHER IN TOKYO!!
I'M...
...FINALLY GETTING OUT OF HERE!!
MIWA LOOKED SO HAPPY ...
WHEN SHE FINALLY GOT HER MOTHER'S APPROVAL TO LEAVE...
...I SAW HER OFF WITH A SMILE.
I'LL CALL YOU!
YOU BETTER!
AND I'LL WRITE!

I LIKE THEM CHUNKY ARMS!!
HIROKO...
...ARE YOU MAKING A PASS AT ME?
KITAMURA ...
Was I that obvious?
Try a different approach...
I LIKES ME A STRONG WOMAN!!
I MARRIED A LOCAL FARMER ...
...AND STARTED A FAMILY.
...BUT I'LL FEED YOU FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE! GUARANTEED!!
Mostly protein...
IT'S A DEAL!!
DA-DUM
HOBBY: HUNTING, HUNTING CLUB
DEER 2 KG
WILD BOAR 3 KG
I CAN'T PROMISE YOU MONEY OR STATUS...
THERE ISN'T ANY DRAMA WHEN IT COMES TO MY MARRIAGE.

...LET MIWA...
"...LIFE WILL BE HARD FOR HER WHEREVER SHE IS?"
"BUT DON'T YOU THINK ..."
PLEASE ...
...FIND PEACE IN TOKYO.

HE'S STILL SEEING HIS EX-WIFE!
WELL, IT WAS HIS MOTHER WHO KICKED HER OUT BECAUSE SHE COULDN'T HAVE CHILDREN, AFTER ALL.
HIS NEW WIFE MUST BE MISERABLE!
WHSPR WHSPR
WHAT LIES.
Tabloid garbage!
SHE'S BEDDED EVERY MALE SERVANT IN THE HOUSE!
WHSPR WHSPR
Mom! I want candy!
WELL, HER HUSBAND'S NO BETTER!
Wow! Rich folk sure are wild!
AND THEY SAY FUJI'S A LOVE CHILD!
I WONDERED IF ANY OF IT WAS TRUE.
"AS LONG AS MY HUSBAND LOVES ME..."
HUMILIATING!
SHE'S SHUT UP IN THAT HOUSE AS A... BREEDER!
HELLO, SHIZUYO ...
...IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
CHIRR CHIRR CHIRR
VROOM!
VROOM!

IT WAS A SIMPLE, ORDINARY LIFE...
IRMP
UGH
...BUT I LOVED IT.
DAIGO
THE NEXT YEAR, WE HAD A BOY.
Hey! Let go of that bottle!
HE HAD HIS FATHER'S HARD HEAD, MY APPETITE— AND HE GREW LIKE A WEED.
WHILE SHE WAS IN TOKYO...
...THE VILLAGE THRIVED ON RUMORS ABOUT THE TSUKISHIMA FAMILY.
WHSPR
Wow! Really?
DID YOU HEAR ABOUT SHIZUYO?! SHE'S GOT LOADS OF LOVERS!
SHE HAD A GIRL AROUND DAIGO'S AGE, NAMED ANN.
EVERY TIME I SAW HER HAPPY FACE...
...I BREATHED A SIGH OF RELIEF.
SOMETIMES...
Hiroko Kagamura
Mieko Uekusa
...WE'D GET PHOTO POSTCARDS FROM MIWA.

I HAVE TO BE STRONG ...
...FOR THESE TWO RASCALS.
BUT I WON'T LET THEM GET ME DOWN.
NOBODY'S INTERESTED IN GETTING TO KNOW ME.
THEY PREFER THEIR FANTASIES.
IF MIWAKO ...
...HAD EVEN HALF SHIZUYO'S STRENGTH...
WOW...

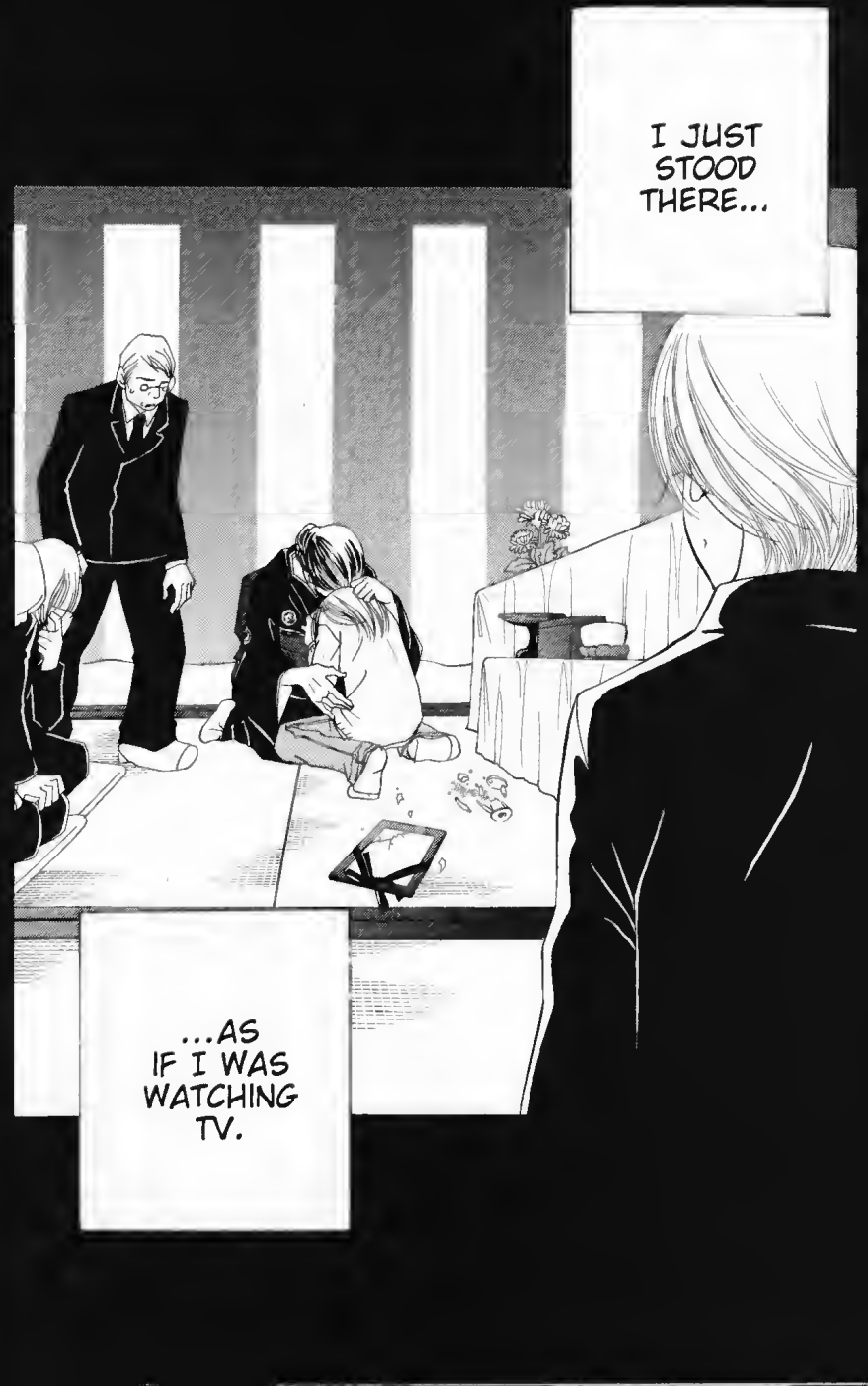
HOW OLD ARE YOU, FUJI?
I'S FWEE!
OH!
SAME AS DAIGO!
FUJI AND SHIKA, RIGHT?
WHAT CUTIES!
I'm a bird in a gilded cage!
My mother-in-law never shuts up!
SINCE I HAD THE CHILDREN, IT'S BEEN HARD FOR ME TO GET OUT...
VIIIKES!
BOOM
CHK
SEEMS LIKE YOU'RE HANDLING THINGS PRETTY WELL.
I'M GLAD.
A BOY, JUST LIKE YOU WANTED!
SOMETIMES THEY GET ME DOWN.
BUT RUMORS ARE JUST RUMORS.
YES...
DESPITE THE RUMORS, YOU MEAN?

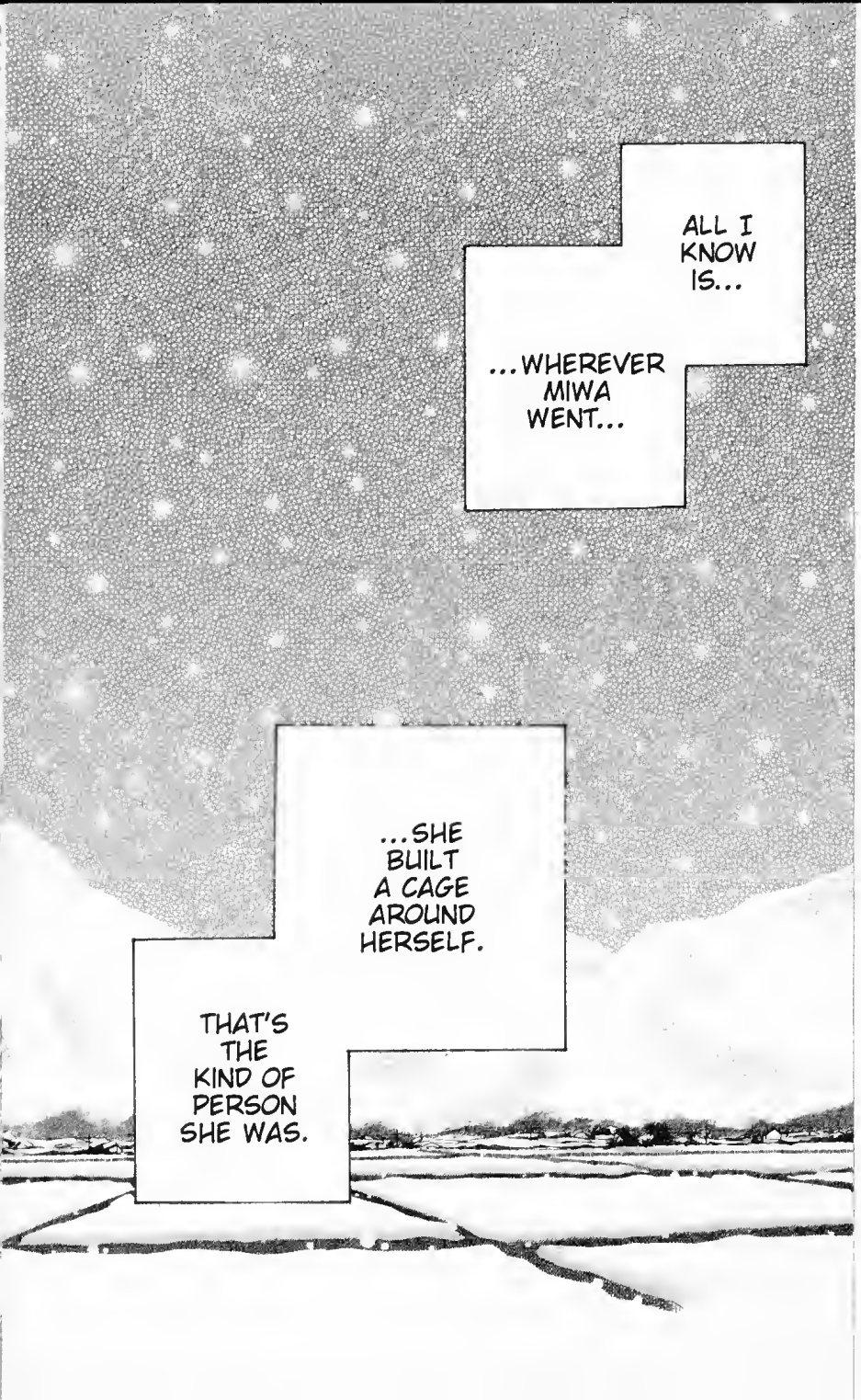
COWARD !!
BUT I NEVER IMAGINED IT WOULD END IN SUCH TRAGEDY.
YOU LIED TO ME!
ANN!
WAAAAAH
AS ANN SOBBED ...
...GRIEVING HER LOSS...

WHSPR
WHSPR
WHSPR
...SHE MIGHT NOT HAVE DIED THE WAY SHE DID.

How awful!
Her grandmother will look after her
What will happen to Ann now?
SHE USED TO BE SO CHEERFUL.
HOW COULD SHE ABANDON HER 12-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER LIKE THIS?
WHAT A TERRIBLE MOTHER.
WHSPR
WHSPR
WHSPR
...SHE WAS AN EMPTY SHELL.
WHEN MIWAKO CAME BACK TO SHIMANE ...
MAYBE IT WAS THE DIVORCE.
SHE ALWAYS LOOKED SO DOWN SINCE SHE CAME BACK.
I HAD NO IDEA ...
SHE WAS SEEING A PSYCHIATRIST, WASN'T SHE?

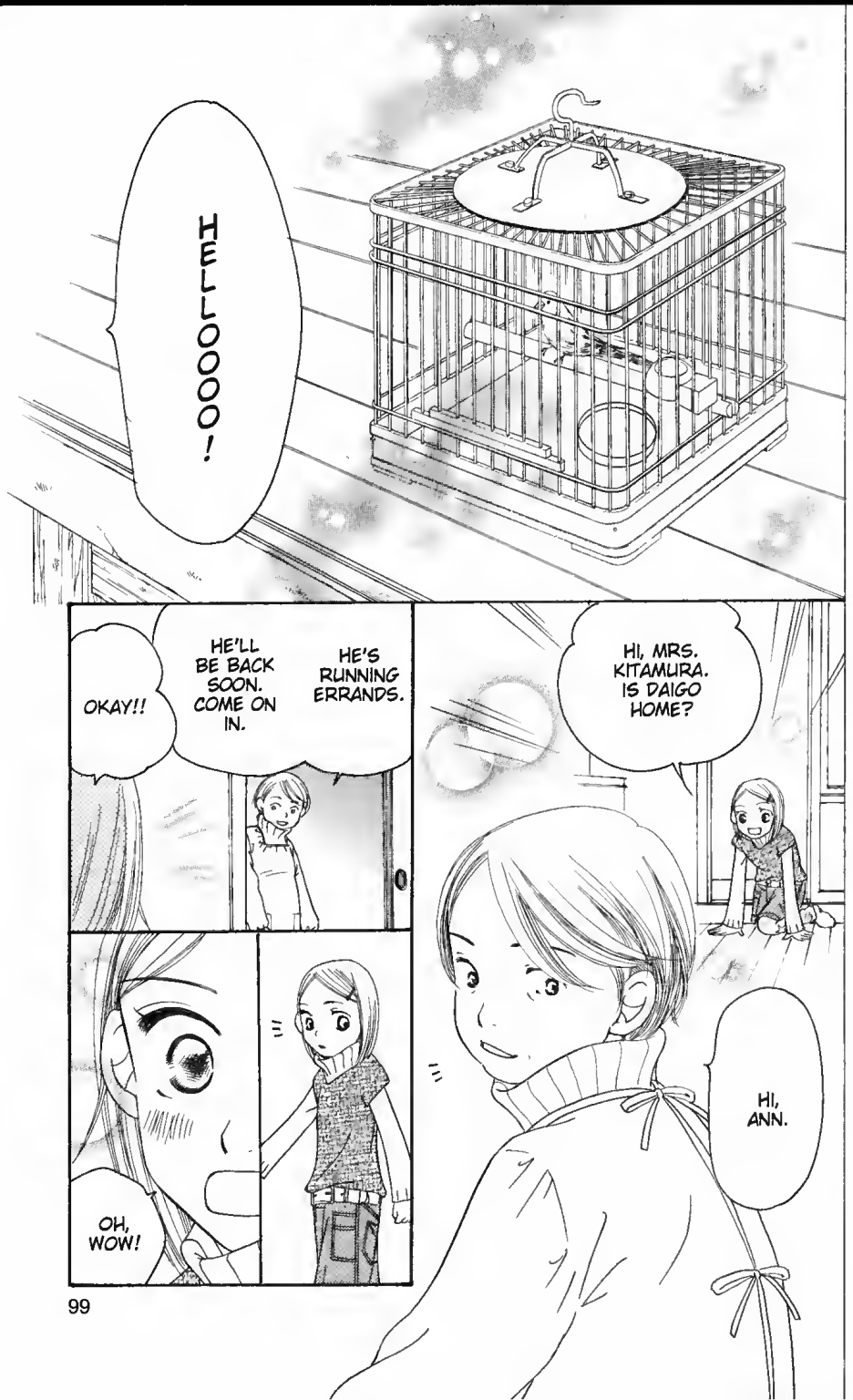
IS THE SERVICE OVER?
YES.
I'M TAKING THESE TWO HOME...
THIS IS WHY...
...I DISLIKED HER.

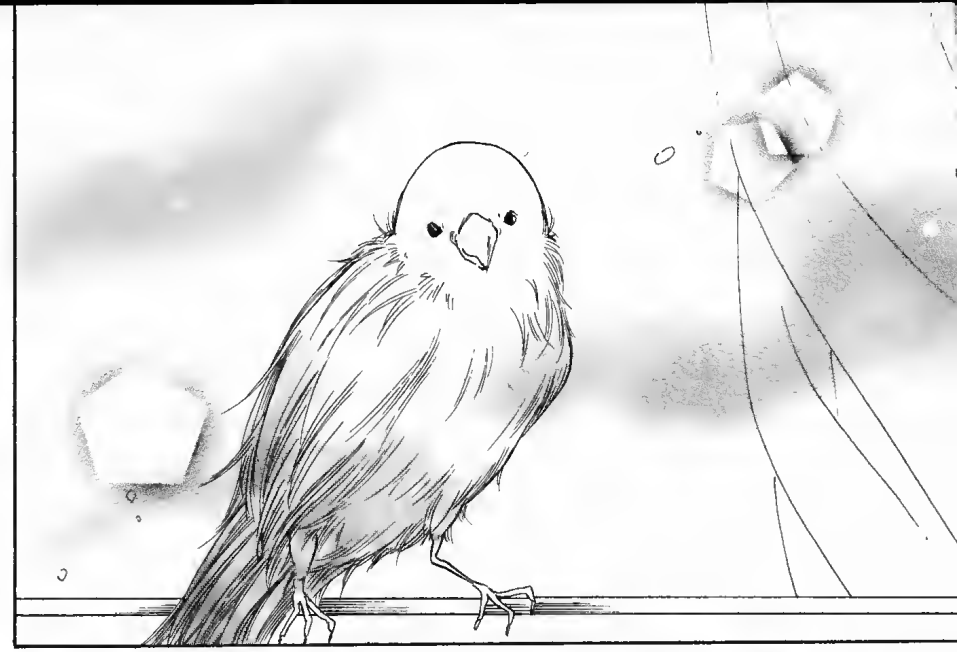

I JUST STOOD THERE...
...AS IF I WAS WATCHING TV.


ALL I KNOW IS...
...WHEREVER MIWA WENT...
...SHE BUILT A CAGE AROUND HERSELF.
THAT'S THE KIND OF PERSON SHE WAS.

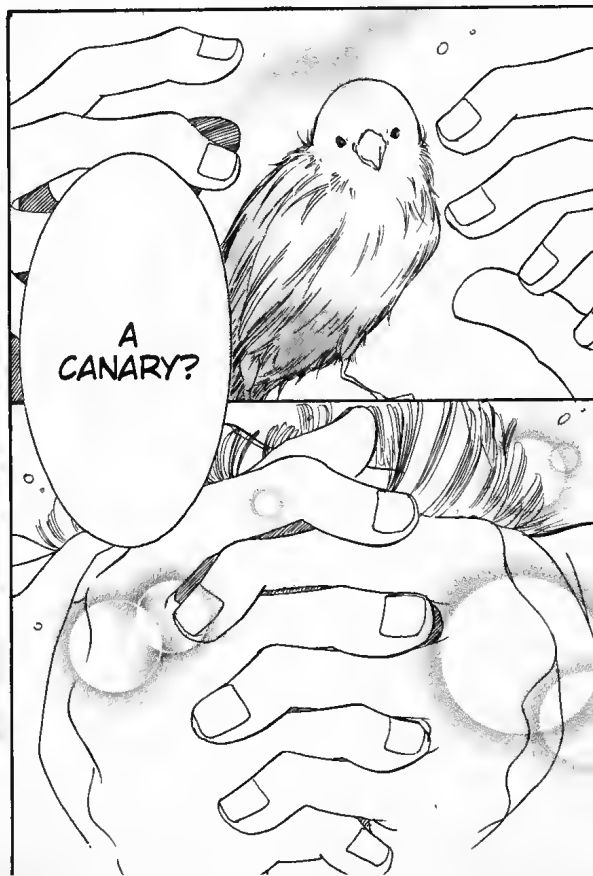
I DON'T KNOW...
...THE BEST WAY...
...TO LIVE.

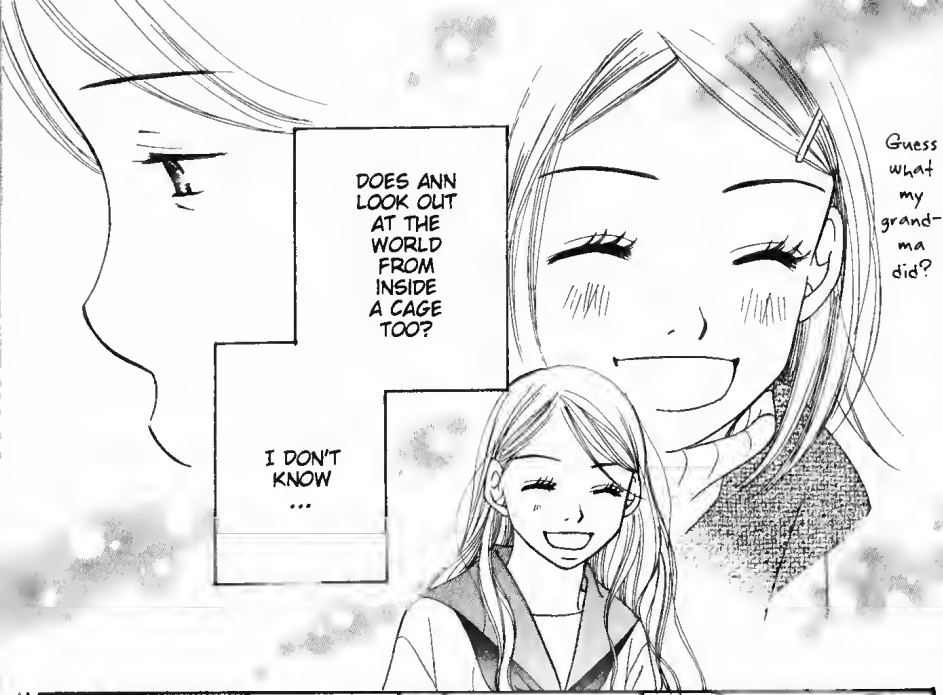
FWIFF
BUT ...
...DO I HURT OTHERS BECAUSE I DON'T UNDERSTAND THEIR PAIN?
GUESS I'LL NEVER KNOW.
I'M HAPPY WITHOUT A CAGE...
DAIGO! HANG THE WASH UP TO DRY!!
I'LL DO IT LATER!
CHRP CHRP CHRP CHRP
That boy!
WHEN I LOOK UP...
...I SEE THE SKY ARCHING ABOVE ME.

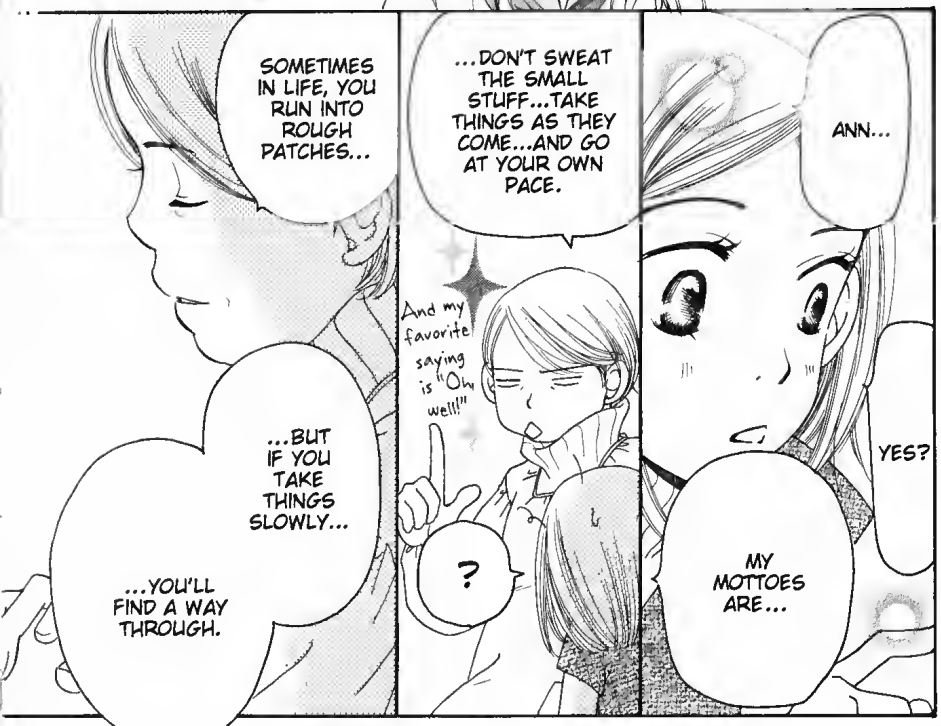

HELLOOOO!
HI, MRS. KITAMURA. IS DAIGO HOME?
HE'S RUNNING ERRANDS.
HE'LL BE BACK SOON. COME ON IN.
OKAY!!
HI, ANN.
OH, WOW!

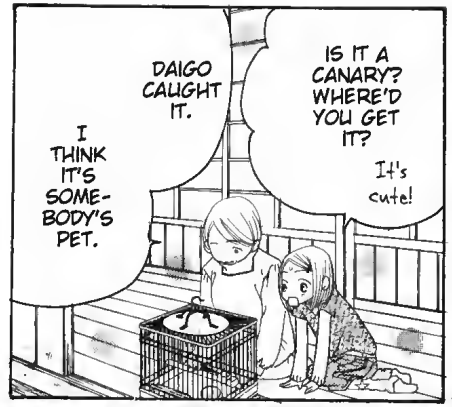


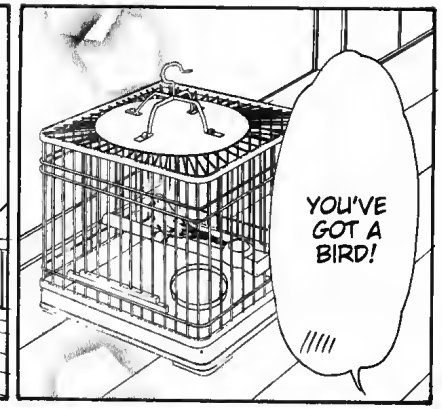
GOT IT!!
UP TO MISCHIEF, AS USUAL ...
Must you catch everything ?!


A CANARY?

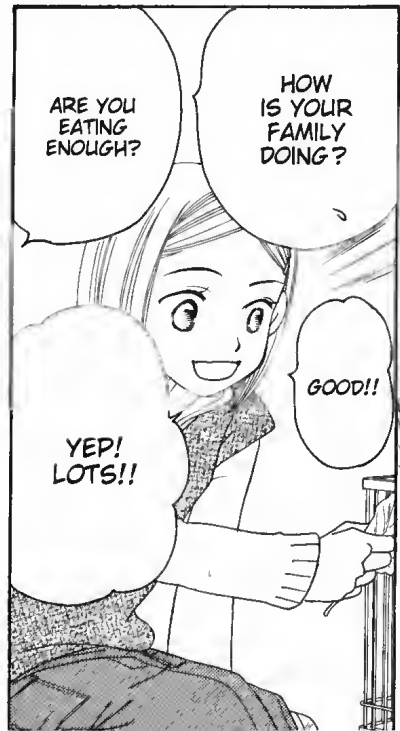

DOES ANN LOOK OUT AT THE WORLD FROM INSIDE A CAGE TOO?
I DON'T KNOW ...
Guess what my grandma did?

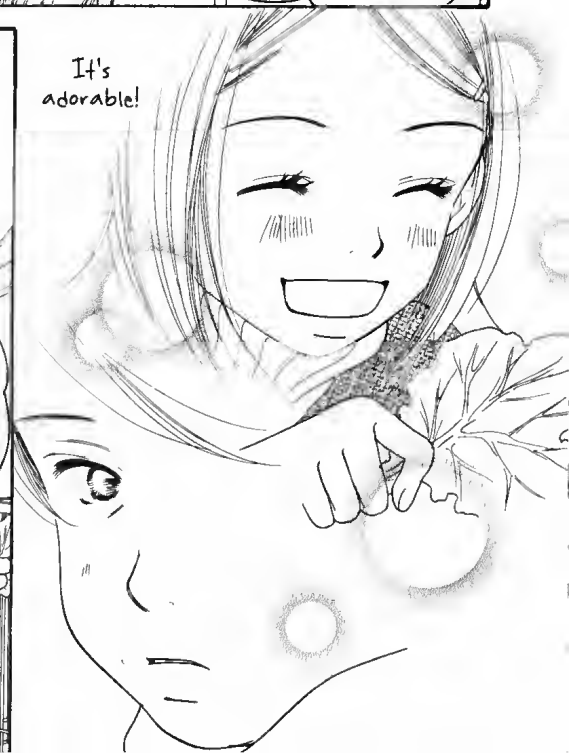

SOMETIMES IN LIFE, YOU RUN INTO ROUGH PATCHES...
...BUT IF YOU TAKE THINGS SLOWLY...
...YOU'LL FIND A WAY THROUGH.
...DON'T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF...TAKE THINGS AS THEY COME...AND GO AT YOUR OWN PACE.
And my favorite saying is "Oh well!!"
?
ANN...
YES?
MY MOTTOES ARE...


I THINK IT'S SOMEBODY'S PET.
DAIGO CAUGHT IT.
IS IT A CANARY? WHERE'D YOU GET IT?
It's cute!

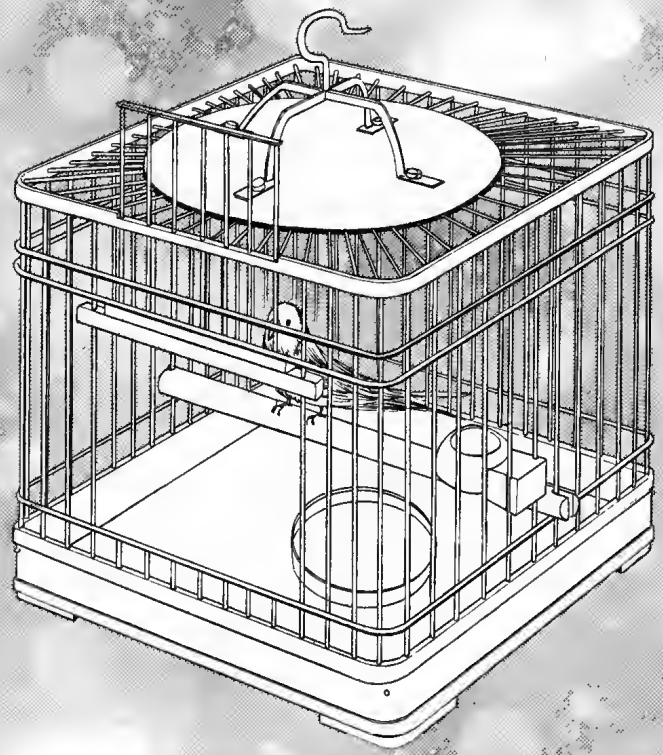

YOU'VE GOT A BIRD!

GO AHEAD.
CAN I FEED IT?
...BUT I THINK IT'S ALL RIGHT NOW.
IT WAS AWFULLY WEAK AT FIRST...


ARE YOU EATING ENOUGH?
HOW IS YOUR FAMILY DOING?
YEP! LOTS!!
GOOD!!


It's adorable!

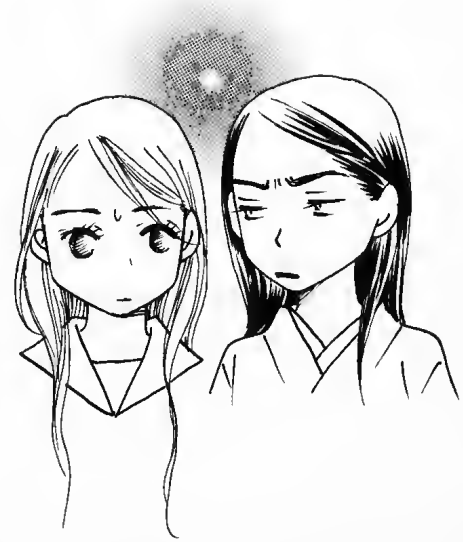
IN OR OUT?



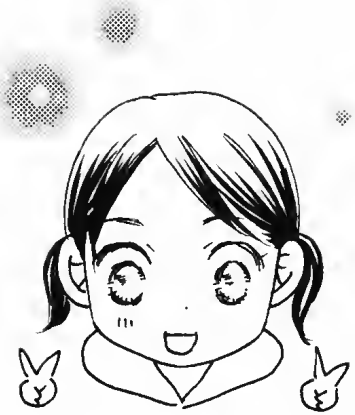
IT'S UP TO YOU.

NOW...
...ITS JOURNEY BEGINS.
Canary ~ 30 Years Ago ~ The End

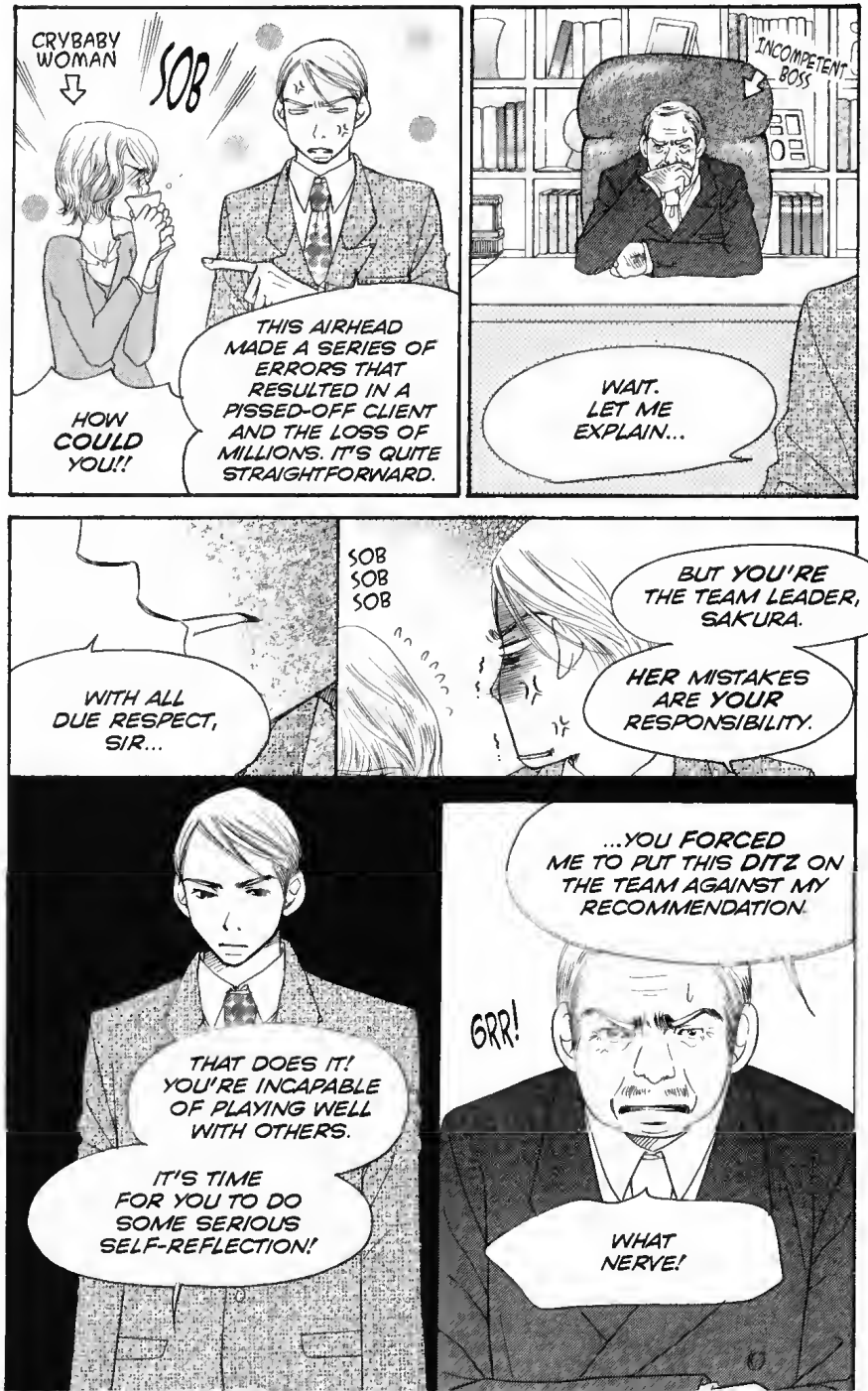
SUMMER
VACATION

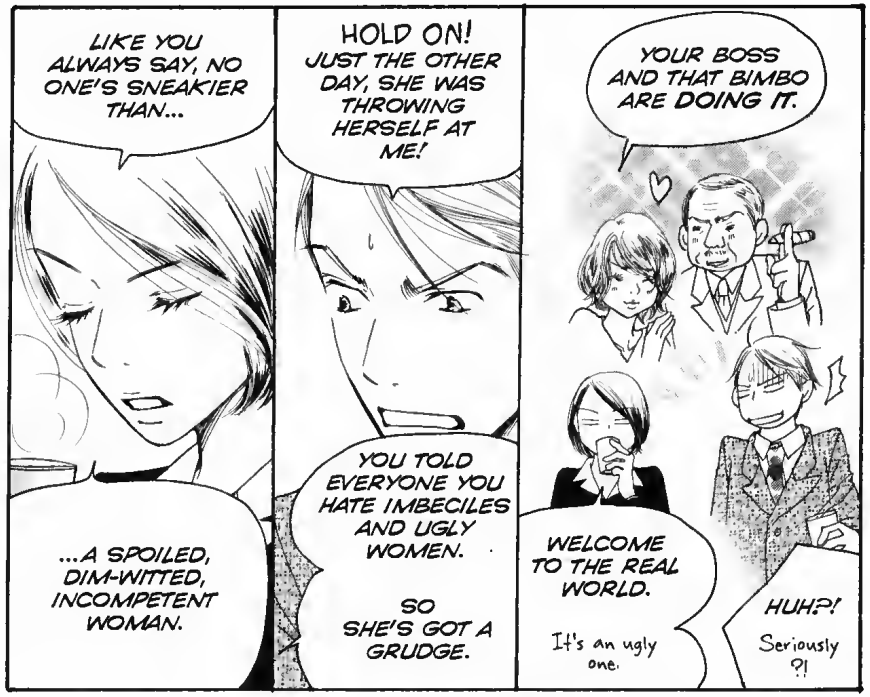


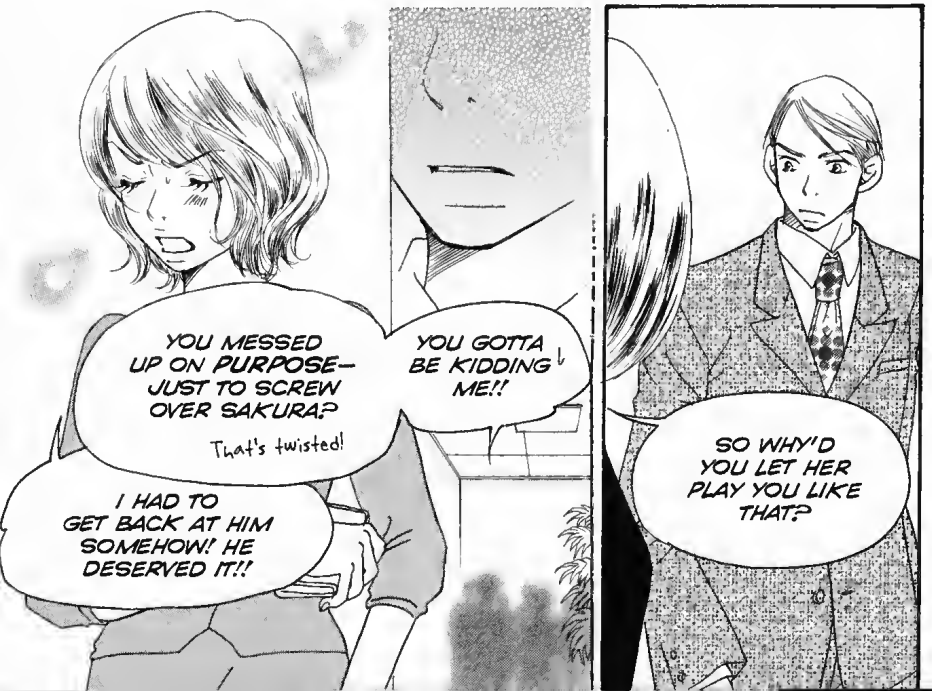
SAKURA, I BLAME YOU FOR THIS CATASTROPHE.
THERE ARE SO MANY...
...THINGS I HATE.
CRYBABY WOMEN. NOISY KIDS. CHEESY TV PROGRAMS. INCOMPETENT BOSSES... AND THEIR MISTRESSES.

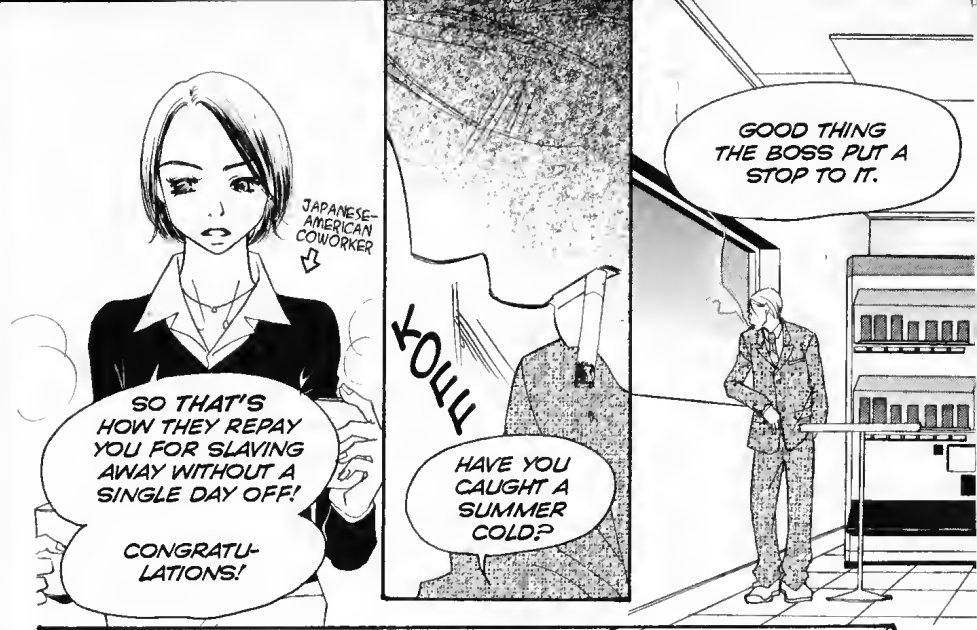


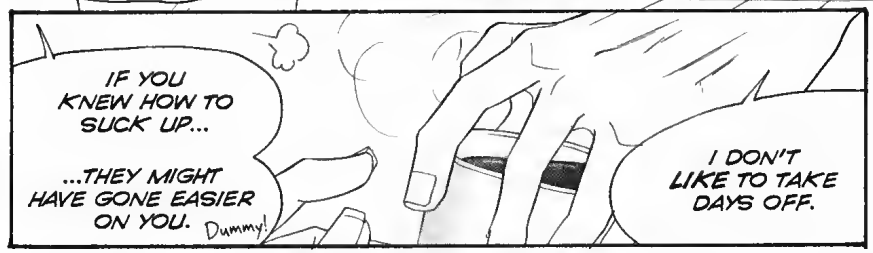
SAKURA!
DON'T TAKE IT TOO HARD.
AFTER THAT DISASTER, JUST BE GLAD YOU DIDN'T GET FIRED!
I'LL BE FILLING IN FOR YOU...
...SO REST EASY.
IT'S TOO BAD ABOUT SAKURA...
HE HAD IT COMING.
It wasn't his fault.
HE'S BEEN MOVING UP THE RANKS WAY TOO QUICKLY SINCE HE GOT HERE FROM JAPAN.
CONSIDER YOURSELF ON LEAVE...
...UNTIL I DECIDE WHAT TO DO WITH YOU!
HONK HONK HONK
NEW YORK CITY

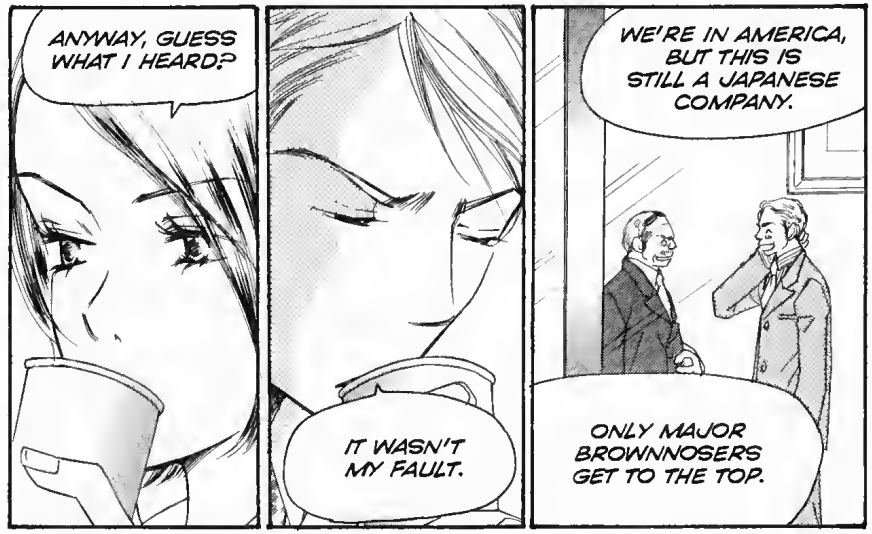

CRYBABY WOMAN
SOB
HOW COULD YOU!!
THIS AIRHEAD MADE A SERIES OF ERRORS THAT RESULTED IN A PISSED-OFF CLIENT AND THE LOSS OF MILLIONS. IT'S QUITE STRAIGHTFORWARD.
INCOMPETENT BOSS
WAIT. LET ME EXPLAIN...
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, SIR...
SOB SOB SOB
BUT YOU'RE THE TEAM LEADER, SAKURA.
HER MISTAKES ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.
THAT DOES IT! YOU'RE INCAPABLE OF PLAYING WELL WITH OTHERS.
IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO DO SOME SERIOUS SELF-REFLECTION!
...YOU FORCED ME TO PUT THIS DITZ ON THE TEAM AGAINST MY RECOMMENDATION.
GRR!
WHAT NERVE!


LIKE YOU ALWAYS SAY, NO ONE'S SNEAKIER THAN...
...A SPOILED, DIM-WITTED, INCOMPETENT WOMAN.
HOLD ON! JUST THE OTHER DAY, SHE WAS THROWING HERSELF AT ME!
YOU TOLD EVERYONE YOU HATE IMBECILES AND UGLY WOMEN.
SO SHE'S GOT A GRUDGE.
YOUR BOSS AND THAT BIMBO ARE DOING IT.
WELCOME TO THE REAL WORLD.
It's an ugly one.
HUH?!
Seriously ?!

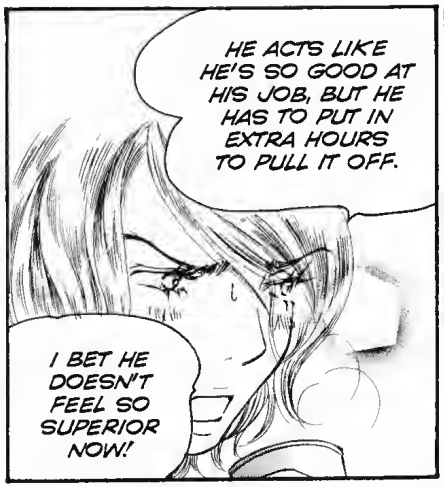

YOU MESSED UP ON PURPOSE— JUST TO SCREW OVER SAKURA?
That's twisted!
I HAD TO GET BACK AT HIM SOMEHOW! HE DESERVED IT!!
YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING ME!!
SO WHY'D YOU LET HER PLAY YOU LIKE THAT?

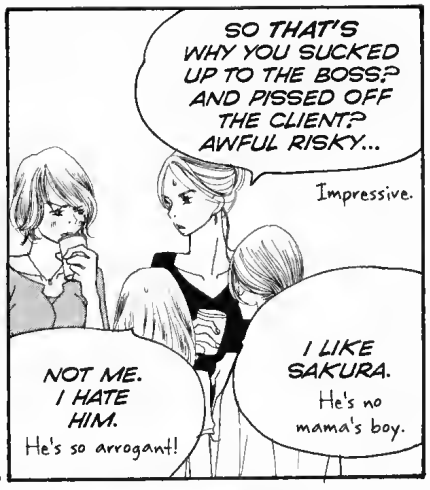

JAPANESE-AMERICAN COWORKER
SO THAT'S HOW THEY REPAY YOU FOR SLAVING AWAY WITHOUT A SINGLE DAY OFF!
CONGRATU-LATIONS!
HOW
HAVE YOU CAUGHT A SUMMER COLD?
GOOD THING THE BOSS PUT A STOP TO IT.


IF YOU KNEW HOW TO SUCK UP...
...THEY MIGHT HAVE GONE EASIER ON YOU.
Dummy!
I DON'T LIKE TO TAKE DAYS OFF.


ANYWAY, GUESS WHAT I HEARD?
IT WASN'T MY FAULT.
WE'RE IN AMERICA, BUT THIS IS STILL A JAPANESE COMPANY.
ONLY MAJOR BROWNNOSERS GET TO THE TOP.

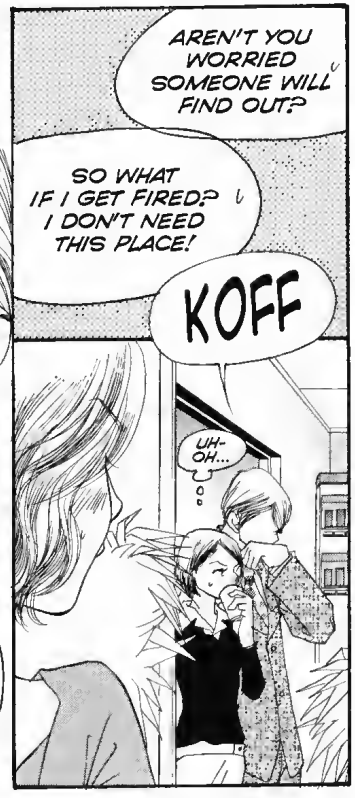
YOU BETTER QUIT ACTING SO HIGH AND MIGHTY!
NO ONE'S GONNA STICK UP FOR YOU.
YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN.
WHAM
GAH
EEEK!


HE ACTS LIKE HE'S SO GOOD AT HIS JOB, BUT HE HAS TO PUT IN EXTRA HOURS TO PULL IT OFF.
I BET HE DOESN'T FEEL SO SUPERIOR NOW!


SO THAT'S WHY YOU SUCK'ED UP TO THE BOSS? AND PISSED OFF THE CLIENT? AWFUL RISKY...
Impressive.
I LIKE SAKURA.
He's no mama's boy.
NOT ME. I HATE HIM.
He's so arrogant!

...COULDN'T GET ANY WORSE...
LIRK
WHAT?!

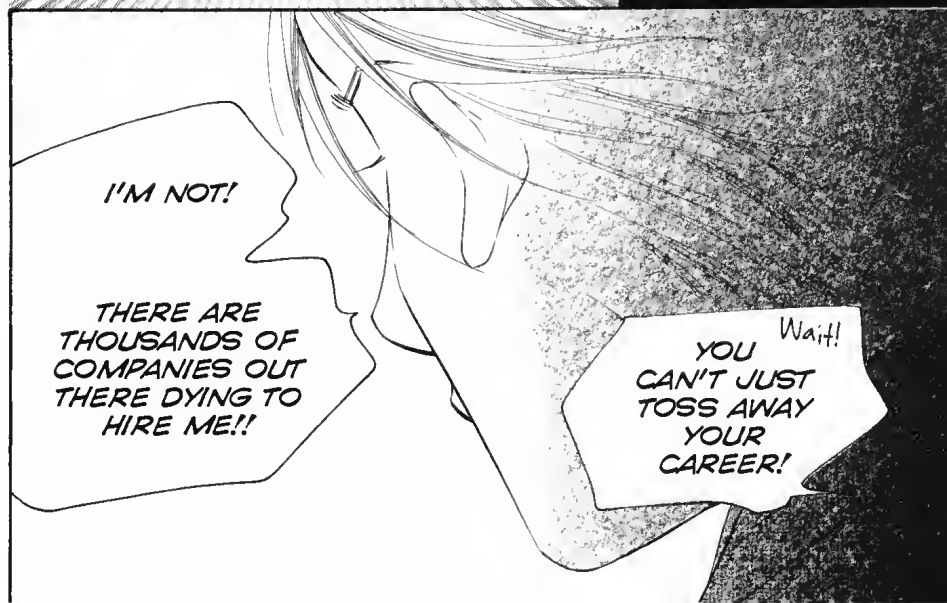
SAKURA?
JUST WHEN I THOUGHT MY OPINION OF YOU...

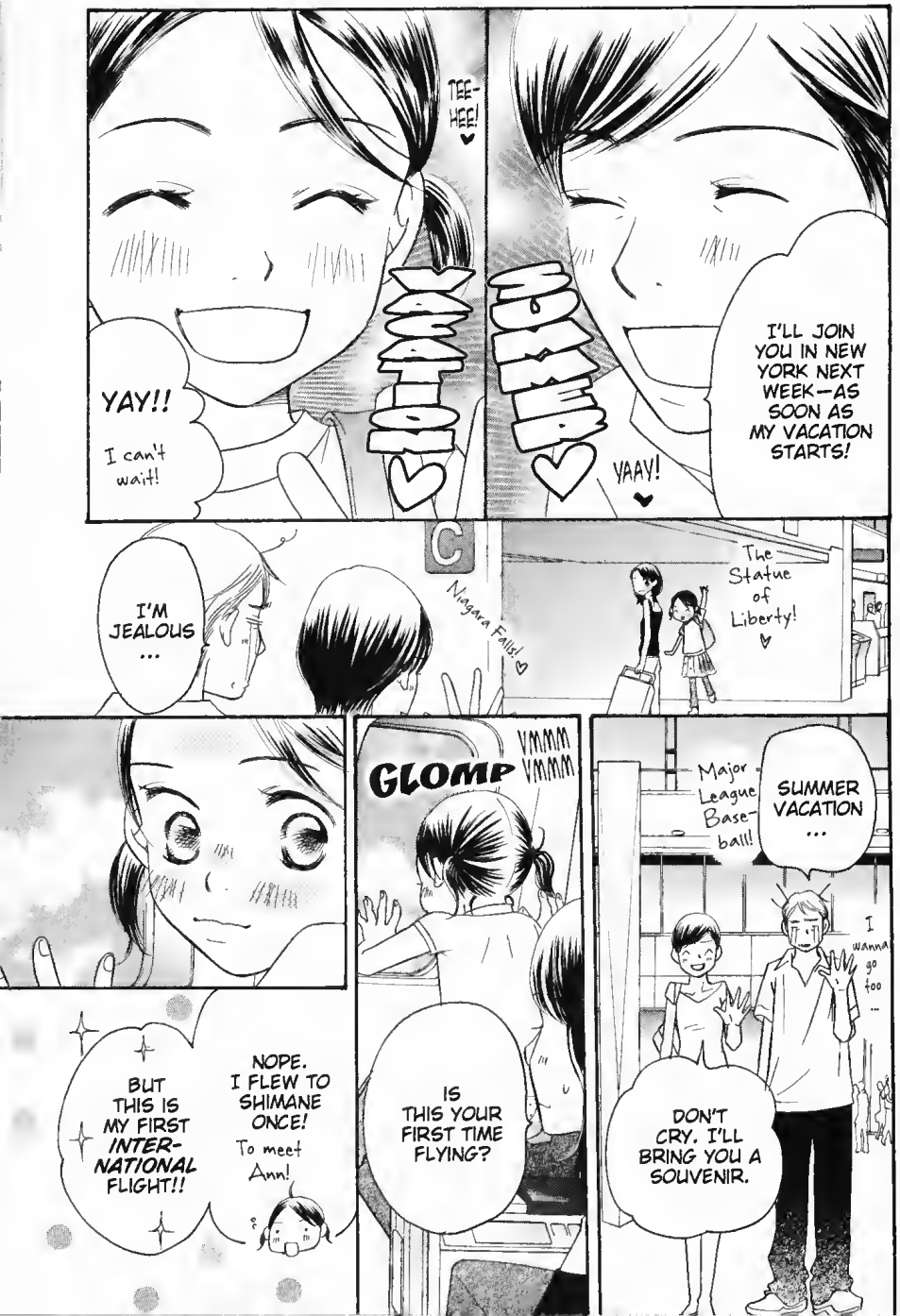

AREN'T YOU WORRIED SOMEONE WILL FIND OUT?
SO WHAT IF I GET FIRED? I DON'T NEED THIS PLACE!
KOFF
UH-OH...

WHEREVER YOU GO...
HONK
...NOTHING WILL EVER GO EXACTLY THE WAY YOU WANT.

WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?!
I QUIT.
TUG
WHAT?!
Agh! He got coffee all over me!
SAKURA, WAIT!
THIS PLACE STINKS!
FW
AP

THAT'S RIDICULOUS!
PLNK


I'M NOT!
THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF COMPANIES OUT THERE DYING TO HIRE ME!!
Wait!
YOU CAN'T JUST TOSS AWAY YOUR CAREER!


TEE-HEE!
SQUEE♡
YAAY!
I'LL JOIN YOU IN NEW YORK NEXT WEEK—AS SOON AS MY VACATION STARTS!
YAY!!
I can't wait!
SQUEAL♡
C
Niagara Falls!♡
The Statue of Liberty!♡
I'M JEALOUS ...
GLOMP
VMMM VMMM
IS THIS YOUR FIRST TIME FLYING?
NOPE. I FLEW TO SHIMANE ONCE!
To meet Ann!
BUT THIS IS MY FIRST INTER-NATIONAL FLIGHT!!
Major League Base-ball!!
SUMMER VACATION ...
I wanna go too ...
DON'T CRY. I'LL BRING YOU A SOUVENIR.

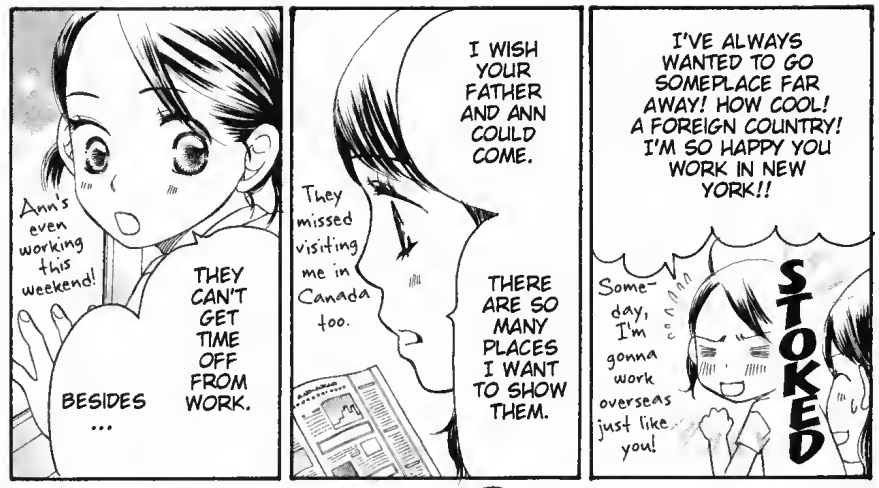
CHI ISN'T GOING BY HERSELF!
I PROMISE I'LL TAKE GOOD CARE OF HER.
DON'T GO!!!
Hey!
GLOM

DON'T WORRY. CHI PROMISED TO STAY HOME AND BE GOOD WHILE SHIKA'S OUT.
YEP!!
I'm already worried sick!
BUT, SHIKA... SHE'LL BE ALONE ALL DAY WHILE YOU'RE AT WORK!

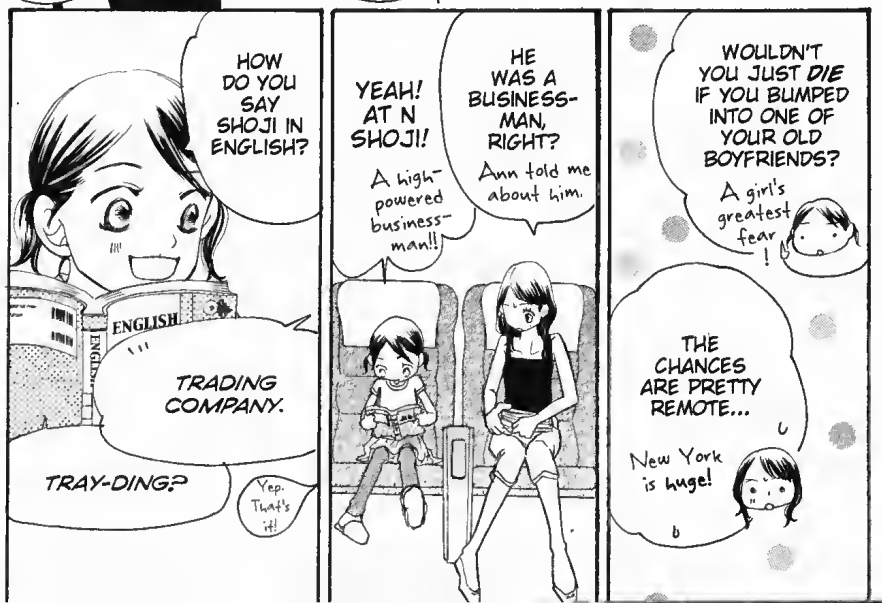
DON'T GET INTO TROUBLE.
I WON'T!!
I WILL!!
DO WHATEVER SHIKA TELLS YOU.
I REMEMBER !!
REMEMBER, AMERICA'S NOT LIKE JAPAN.
PROMISE ?

NARITA AIRPORT
VOOOSHH
ARE YOU SURE ...
...YOU WANT TO GO TO AMERICA ALL BY YOURSELF?

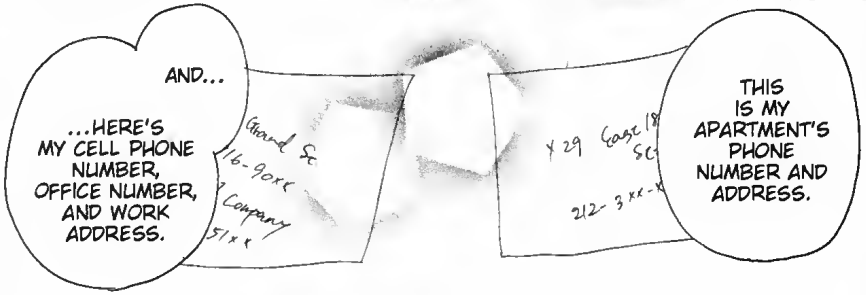
...WOULD SHE...
...LIVE IN AMERICA NOW?
HNK HNK
IF...
...ANN HAD MARRIED HIM...
NEW YORK
HMM
I MET SAKURA ONCE.
KNOW WHAT?
HE WAS ALL FROWNY AND SCARY.
HE CAME TO OUR HOUSE WHEN HE GOT ENGAGED TO ANN.
Handsome, though.
HNK HNK
YOU'VE GOT A NICE VIEW!
WOW!!
NO PARKING ANYTIME
ONE WAY
EVERY-THING'S SO DIFFERENT FROM JAPAN!!
THE AIR AND THE BUILDINGS AND THE PEOPLE ...
Of course it is. But you know what I mean!

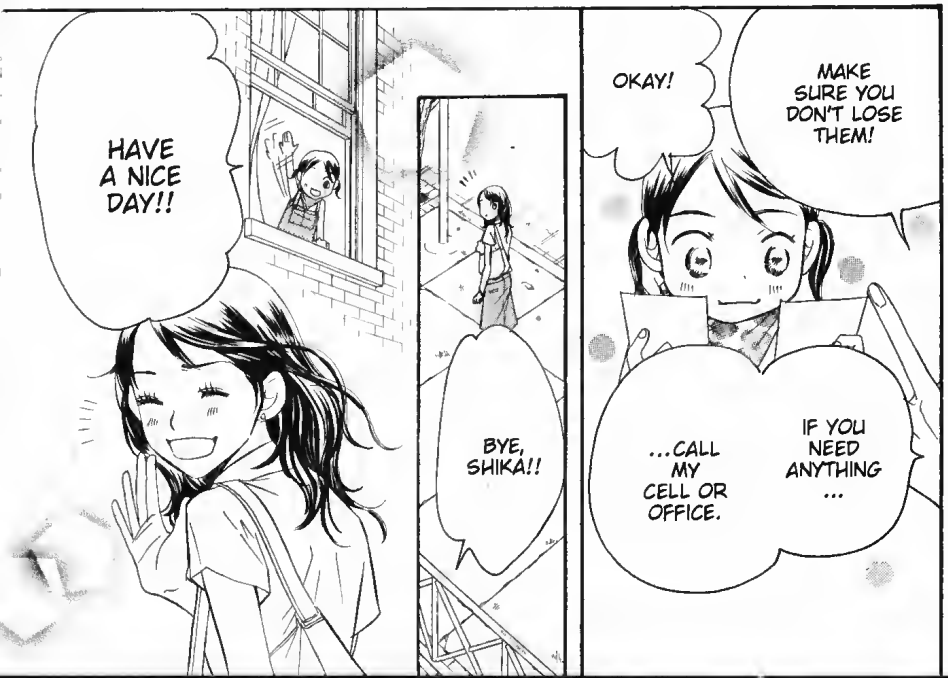

Ann's even working this weekend!
BESIDES ...
THEY CAN'T GET TIME OFF FROM WORK.
They missed visiting me in Canada too.
I WISH YOUR FATHER AND ANN COULD COME.
THERE ARE SO MANY PLACES I WANT TO SHOW THEM.
I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO GO SOMEPLACE FAR AWAY! HOW COOL! A FOREIGN COUNTRY! I'M SO HAPPY YOU WORK IN NEW YORK!!
Some-day, I'm gonna work overseas just like you!
STOKED

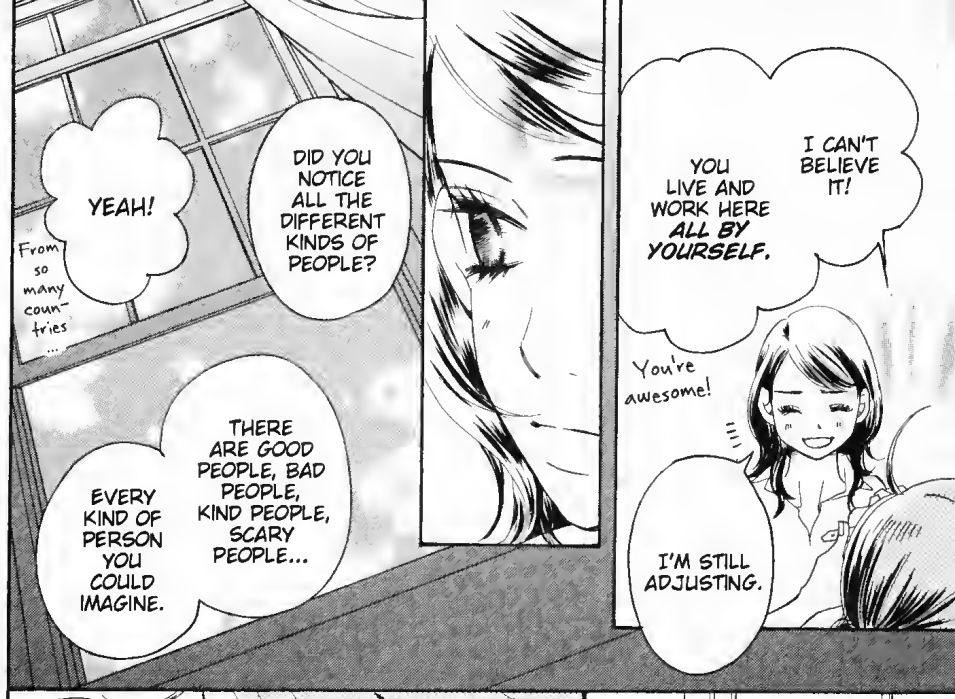
OH. I didn't know that.
KNOW WHY?
'CAUSE SAKURA, HER EX-FIANCÉ, LIVES THERE!
THE WHAT?! Devil's gate ?
ANN SAYS NEW YORK IS...
...THE DEVIL'S GATE.


HOW DO YOU SAY SHOJI IN ENGLISH?
ENGLISH
TRADING COMPANY.
TRAY-DING?
Yep. That's it!
YEAH! AT N SHOJI!
A high-powered business-man!!
HE WAS A BUSINESS-MAN, RIGHT?
Ann told me about him.
WOULDN'T YOU JUST DIE IF YOU BUMPED INTO ONE OF YOUR OLD BOYFRIENDS?
A girl's greatest fear!
THE CHANCES ARE PRETTY REMOTE...
New York is huge!

Don't even open the door.
DON'T GO OUTSIDE ALONE, OKAY?
OKAY!
THERE'S FOOD IN THE FRIDGE.
WE'LL GO SIGHT-SEEING TOMORROW.
Pick some places you'd like to see.
UNTIL THEN ...
DON'T WORRY! I'LL STAY RIGHT HERE!!
TO WORK?
I BETTER GET GOING.
YEP. I'LL BE BACK THIS EVENING.
WELL...


AND... ...HERE'S MY CELL PHONE NUMBER, OFFICE NUMBER, AND WORK ADDRESS.
THIS IS MY APARTMENT'S PHONE NUMBER AND ADDRESS.


HAVE A NICE DAY!!
BYE, SHIKA!!
OKAY!
MAKE SURE YOU DON'T LOSE THEM!
...CALL MY CELL OR OFFICE.
IF YOU NEED ANYTHING ...


From so many countries ...
YEAH!
DID YOU NOTICE ALL THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF PEOPLE?
EVERY KIND OF PERSON YOU COULD IMAGINE.
THERE ARE GOOD PEOPLE, BAD PEOPLE, KIND PEOPLE, SCARY PEOPLE...
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
YOU LIVE AND WORK HERE ALL BY YOURSELF.
You're awesome!
I'M STILL ADJUSTING.

YOU CAN FEEL IT HERE...
...MORE SO THAN IN JAPAN.
IT'S NATURAL ...
...AND GOOD.
Is it hard for you?
KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
...AND NOT ANYONE ELSE.
HERE, I CAN BE SURE THAT I'M ME...
...THEIR BELIEFS, PERSPECTIVES, AND THOUGHTS...
WHAT THEY CARE ABOUT ...
BUT THAT'S NOT A BAD THING.
...THEY'RE ALL DIFFERENT.

KREAK
I'm just going down-stairs ...
That's okay, right?
IT'LL JUST BE FOR A MINUTE...
GULP
FWOO
FWIP
BUMP
OOPS!
MAYBE THEY'RE OVER THERE.
HUFF
HUFF
THAT'S WEIRD. THEY SHOULD BE RIGHT HERE!
They're gone!

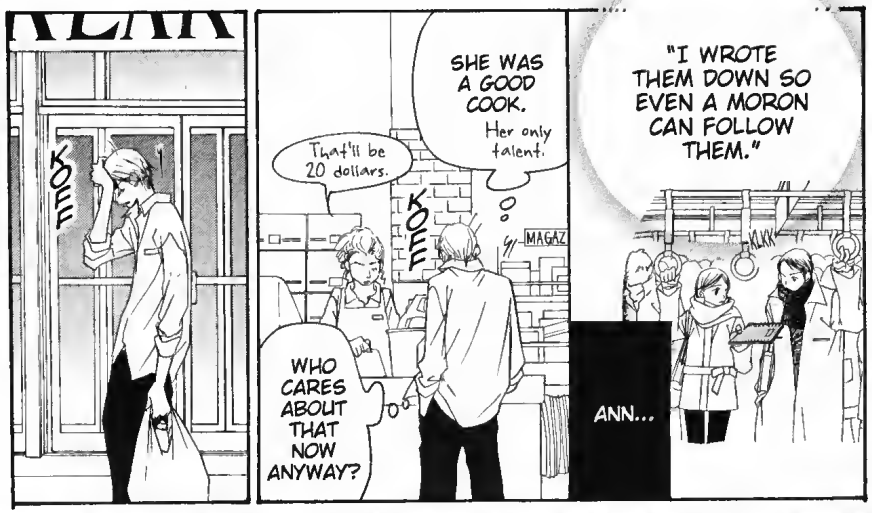
FWOOOSH
SKRK
SKRK
FIRST, THE APARTMENT'S PHONE NUMBER...
PLOK
I'LL WRITE THEM ON MY ARM JUST IN CASE...
AAAAGH!
DO WHATEVER SHIKA TELLS YOU.
I WILL !!
W-WHAT SHOULD I DO?
IF ANY-THING HAPPENS, CALL ME.
MAKE SURE YOU DON'T LOSE THEM!
SWEAT
SWEAT
SWEAT
PUMP
DON'T GO OUTSIDE ALONE, OKAY?
GASP

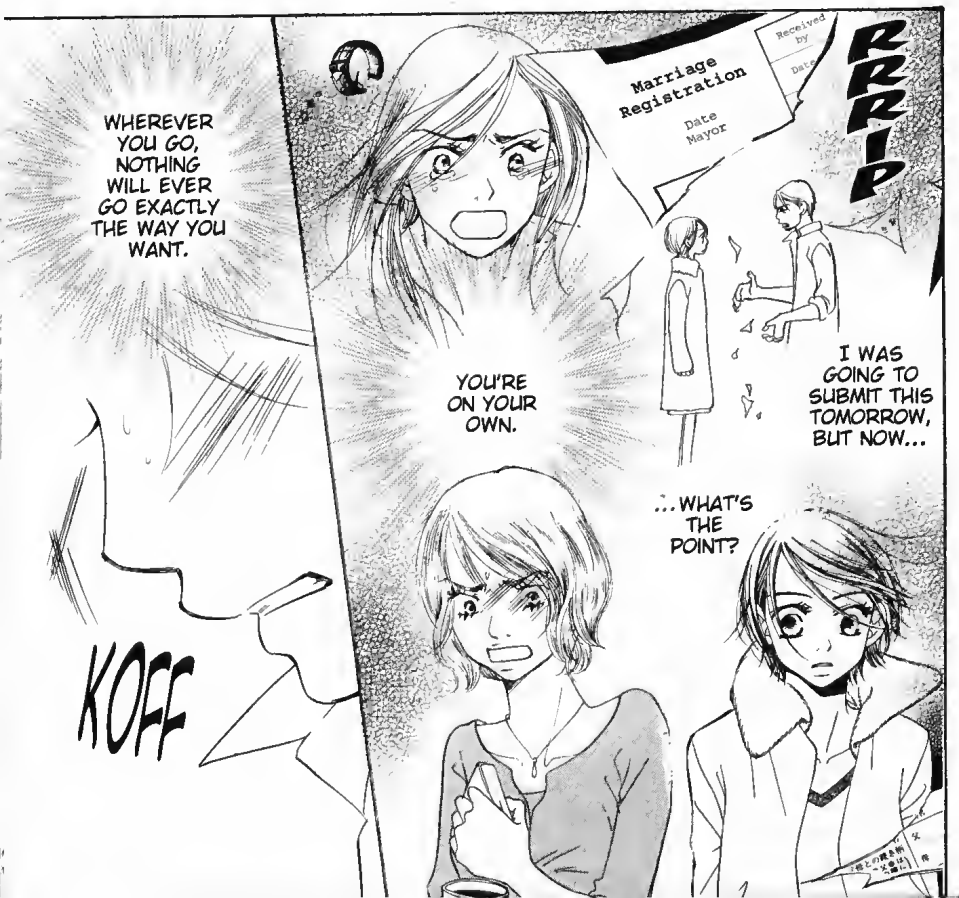
WHAT?
UM... UH...
PLEASE TAKE ME TO SHIKA'S APART-MENT!!
E...
EXCUSE ME!
HONNK
OH! A taxi!

N...
N SHOJI...
PARDON ME?
SOME-BODY HELP ME!
I DON'T EVEN REMEMBER HER COMPANY'S NAME...
I'm such a dummy!!
I'VE ONLY WRITTEN DOWN THE PHONE NUMBER...
SOMEBODY...

WOOSH
What the hell's your problem?!

"AMERICA'S NOT LIKE JAPAN."
HUFF
"DON'T GET INTO TROUBLE."
HUFF
HUFF
"AMERICA IS DANGER-OUS."
W-WHERE AM I?!
LOST

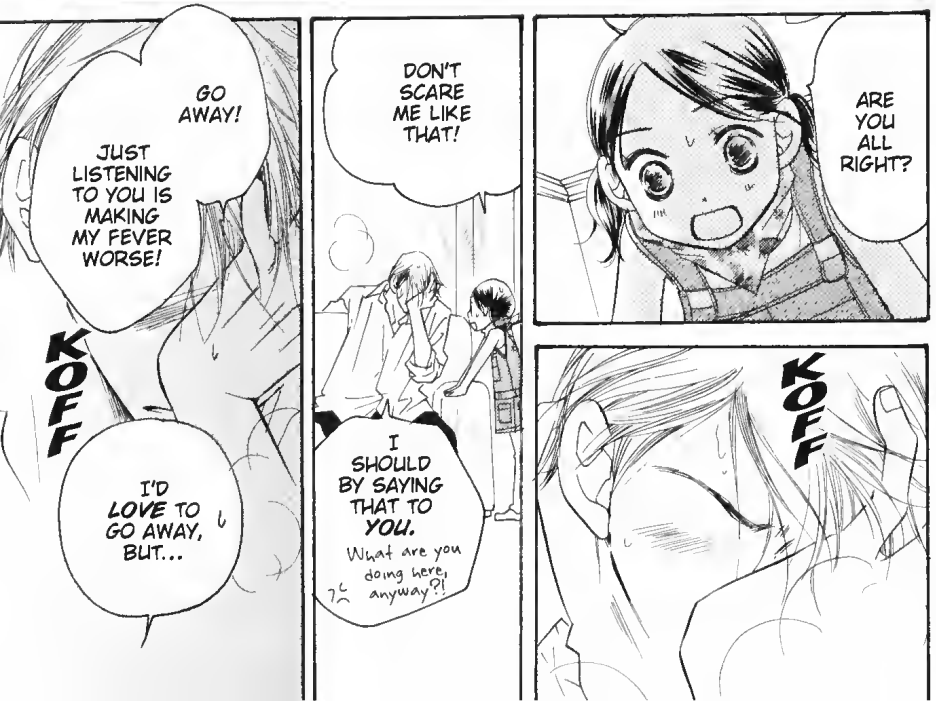

KOFF
KOFF
That'll be 20 dollars.
SHE WAS A GOOD COOK.
Her only talent.
WHO CARES ABOUT THAT NOW ANYWAY?
"I WROTE THEM DOWN SO EVEN A MORON CAN FOLLOW THEM."
ANN...

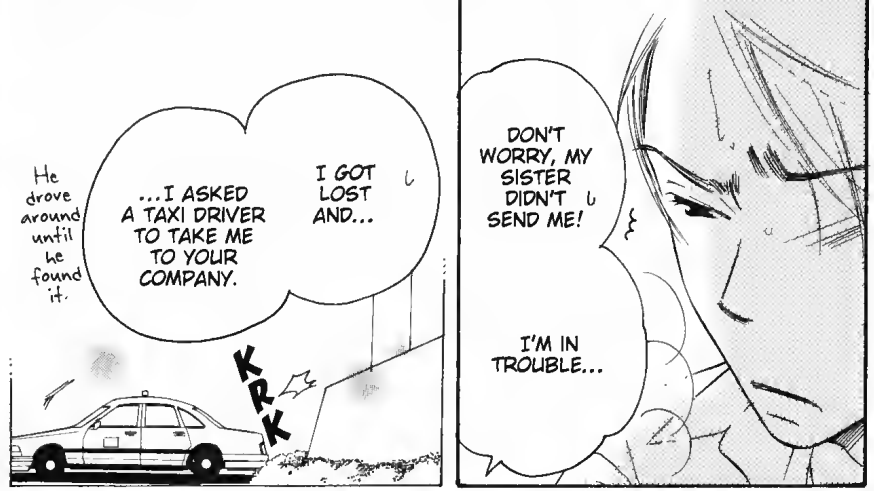

WHEREVER YOU GO, NOTHING WILL EVER GO EXACTLY THE WAY YOU WANT.
KOFF
Marriage Registration
Date Mayor
Received by
Date
RRRIP
YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN.
I WAS GOING TO SUBMIT THIS TOMORROW, BUT NOW...
...WHAT'S THE POINT?

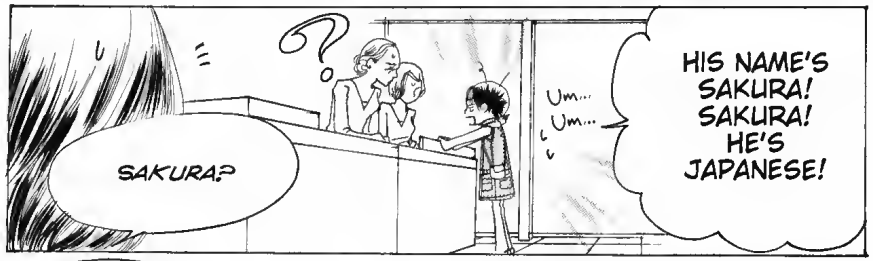
KOFF
LET'S GO!
N TRADING COMPANY!
NOW I'M COMING DOWN WITH A FEVER...
UH-OH...
I'm achy all over...
LARGE PIZZA
FRENCH FRIES
OH, CRAP...
Nothing to eat...
"JAPANESE RECIPES."
FLIP
apple
KOFF
FINALLY, SOMETHING I CAN EAT!
WHAT DO AMERICANS EAT WHEN THEY HAVE A COLD?
I WANT KAYU, BUT THEY DON'T SELL THE INSTANT KIND HERE.
Am I supposed to cook it from scratch?!
FLMP
Rice

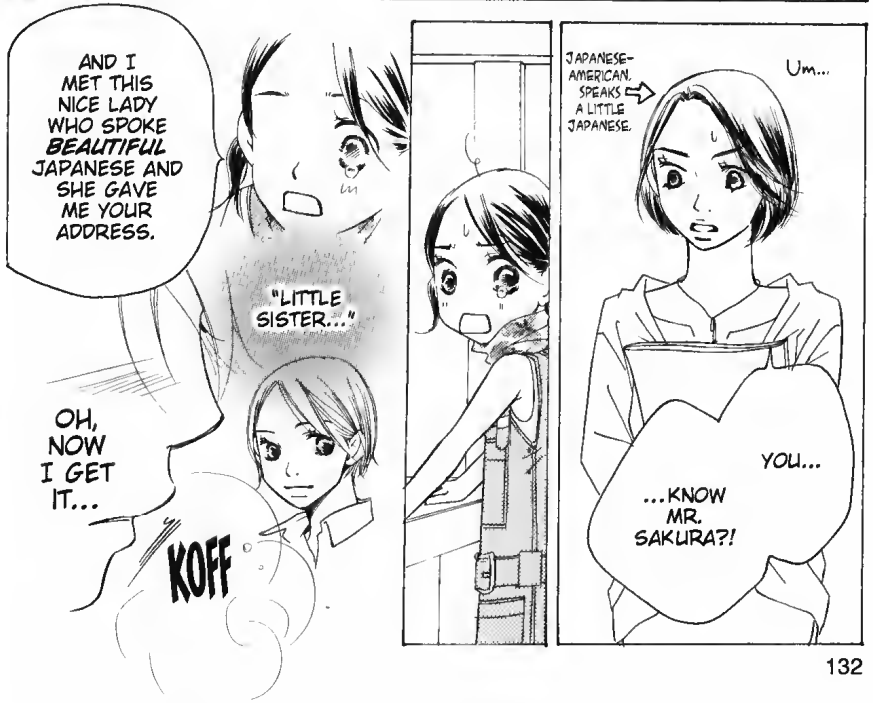
THIS SUCKS.
MY HEAD IS THROBBING.
SAKURA!
NO WAY ...
"SAKURA!"
THAT VOICE...
SAKURA!
I'M SO GLAD TO SEE SOMEONE I KNOW !!!
SAKURA!
SOB SOB SOB SOB
WHEEZE
WHAT THE ...?
SHOVE
OW.
ANN MINASE'S SISTER!
UM, NICE TO MEET YOU— AGAIN! I'M CHI!

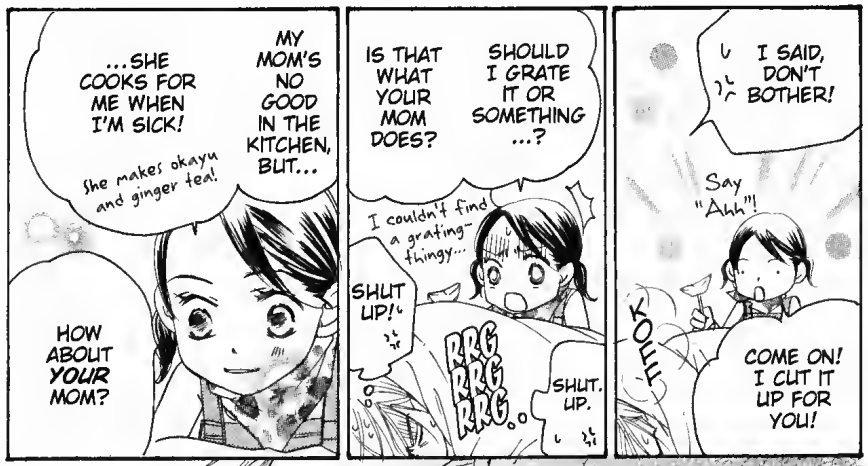
IO22
SAKURA ...?
KOFF
SLIP
KOFF
THEY HAVE THE SAME VOICE.
KIND OF SHRILL...


GO AWAY!
JUST LISTENING TO YOU IS MAKING MY FEVER WORSE!
KOFF
I'D LOVE TO GO AWAY, BUT...
DON'T SCARE ME LIKE THAT!
I SHOULD BY SAYING THAT TO YOU.
What are you doing here, anyway?!
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
KOFF


He drove around until he found it.
...I ASKED A TAXI DRIVER TO TAKE ME TO YOUR COMPANY.
I GOT LOST AND...
KRK
DON'T WORRY, MY SISTER DIDN'T SEND ME!
I'M IN TROUBLE...

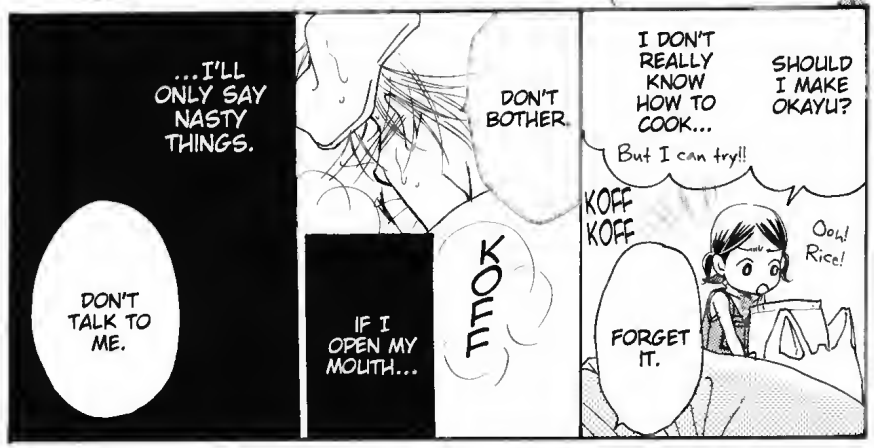

SAKURA?
Um... Um...
HIS NAME'S SAKURA! SAKURA! HE'S JAPANESE!


AND I MET THIS NICE LADY WHO SPOKE BEAUTIFUL JAPANESE AND SHE GAVE ME YOUR ADDRESS.
"LITTLE SISTER..."
OH, NOW I GET IT...
KOFF
JAPANESE-AMERICAN. SPEAKS A LITTLE JAPANESE.
Um...
...KNOW MR. SAKURA?!
YOU...


...SHE COOKS FOR ME WHEN I'M SICK!
She makes okayu and ginger tea!
MY MOM'S NO GOOD IN THE KITCHEN, BUT...
HOW ABOUT YOUR MOM?
IS THAT WHAT YOUR MOM DOES?
SHOULD I GRATE IT OR SOMETHING ...?
I couldn't find a grating-thingy...
SHUT UP!
RRG RRG RRG...
SHUT. UP.
I SAID, DON'T BOTHER!
Say "Ahh"!
KOLLL
COME ON! I CUT IT UP FOR YOU!

MY MOTHER JUST...
KOFF
ALL SHE EVER DID WAS WHINE AND COMPLAIN.
KOFF
TYPICAL FEMALE.
UH-OH. HERE I GO...
...HEATED UP PRE-COOKED DISHES ...
EVEN WHEN I WAS SICK.
THAT'S THE KIND OF WOMAN SHE WAS.

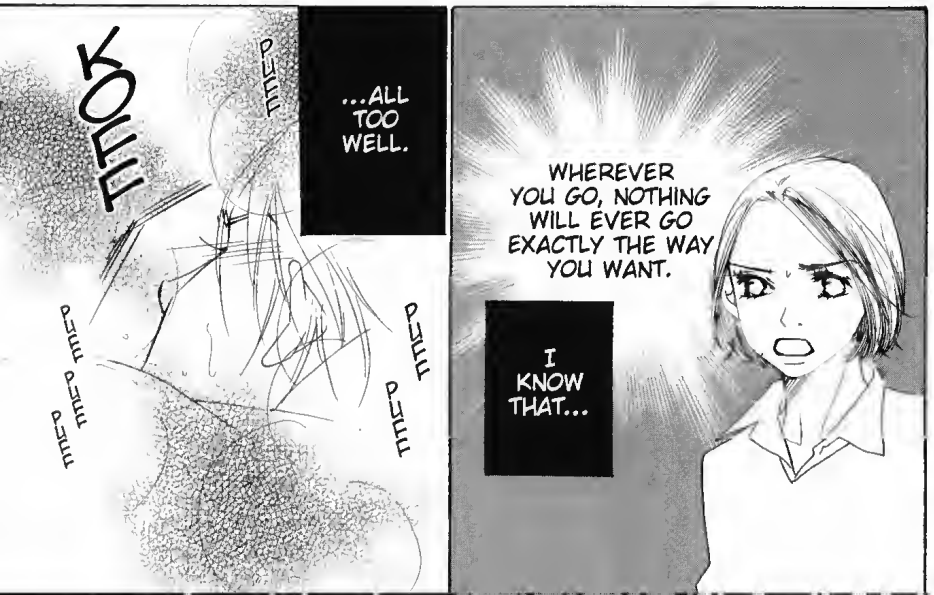
WHAT A NIGHT-MARE...
WANT ME TO COOK YOU SOME-THING?
UM ...
...IS IT OKAY IF I ...?
KOLLL
I DON'T HAVE ANY PLACE TO GO TO.
I CAN CALL SHIKA AFTER SHE GETS HOME, AND SHE'LL COME PICK ME UP.
Until then...

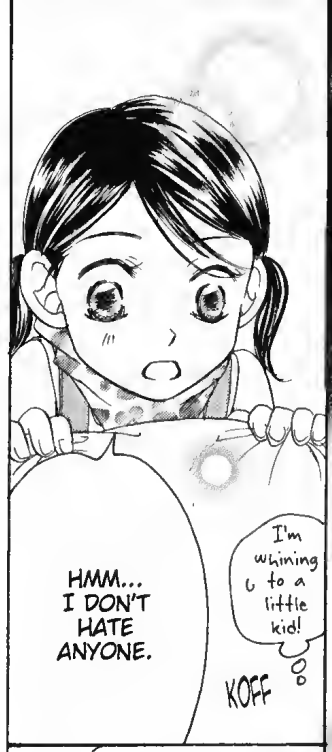

...I'LL ONLY SAY NASTY THINGS.
DON'T TALK TO ME.
DON'T BOTHER.
IF I OPEN MY MOUTH...
KOFF
I DON'T REALLY KNOW HOW TO COOK...
SHOULD I MAKE OKAYU?
But I can try!!
KOFF KOFF
Ooh! Rice!
FORGET IT.

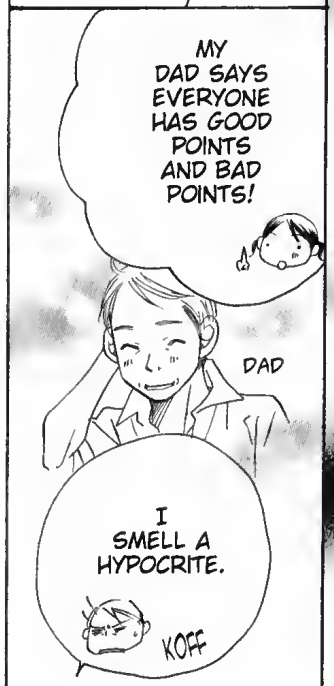
TOK
HERE. HAVE SOME.
An apple!
Hm?

KOFF
I DON'T...
RATT CLNK KLTTR
CAN'T SLEEP.
She's too noisy.
KFF KFF KFF
I'LL GO MAKE SOME OKAYU.
KOFF
Yep! That's right!!
You're so negative!
SAKURA...
...YOU MUST HAVE LOTS OF ENEMIES.

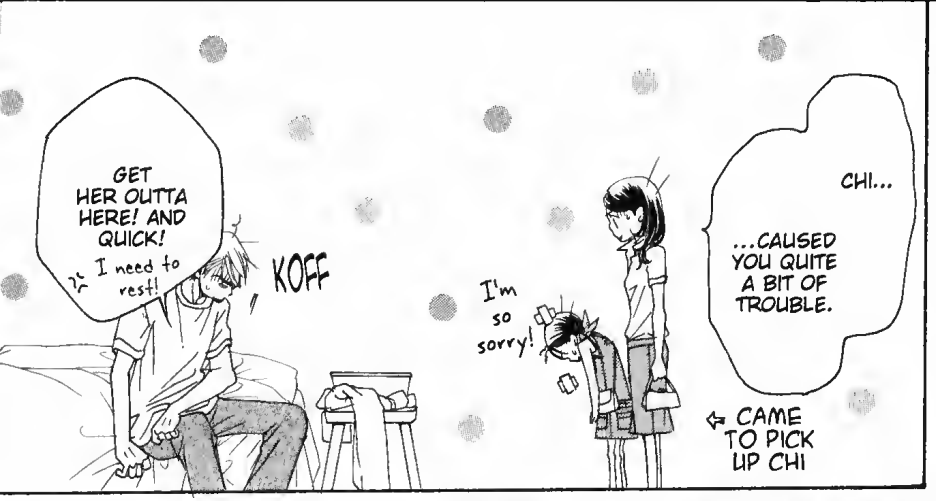
AS A RESULT... I HAVE A LOT OF ENEMIES.
It's a catch-22
BUT I DON'T TRUST THEM EITHER.
I DON'T LIKE TO CRITICIZE PEOPLE ALL THE TIME.
I JUST DON'T WANT TO BE DEPENDENT ON ANYONE.
...TRY TO MAKE ENEMIES.

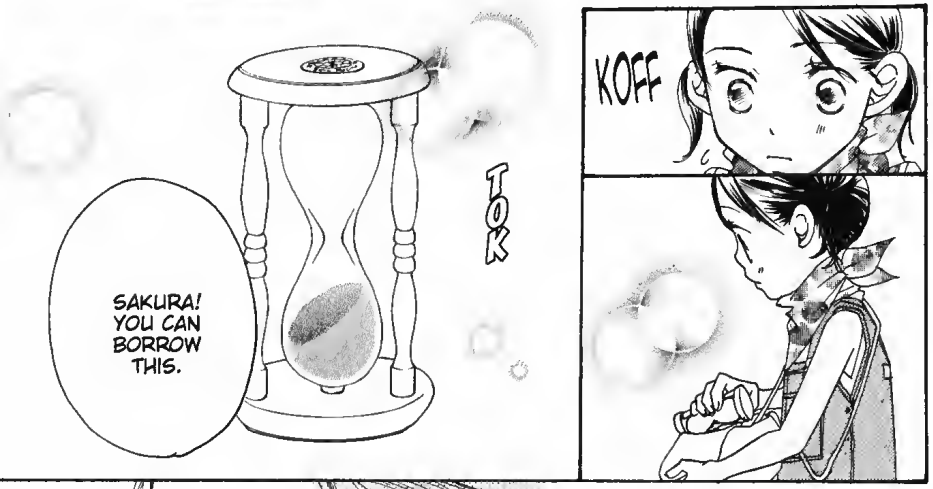

KOFF
...ALL TOO WELL.
WHEREVER YOU GO, NOTHING WILL EVER GO EXACTLY THE WAY YOU WANT.
I KNOW THAT...


HMM... I DON'T HATE ANYONE.
I'm whining to a little kid!
KOFF

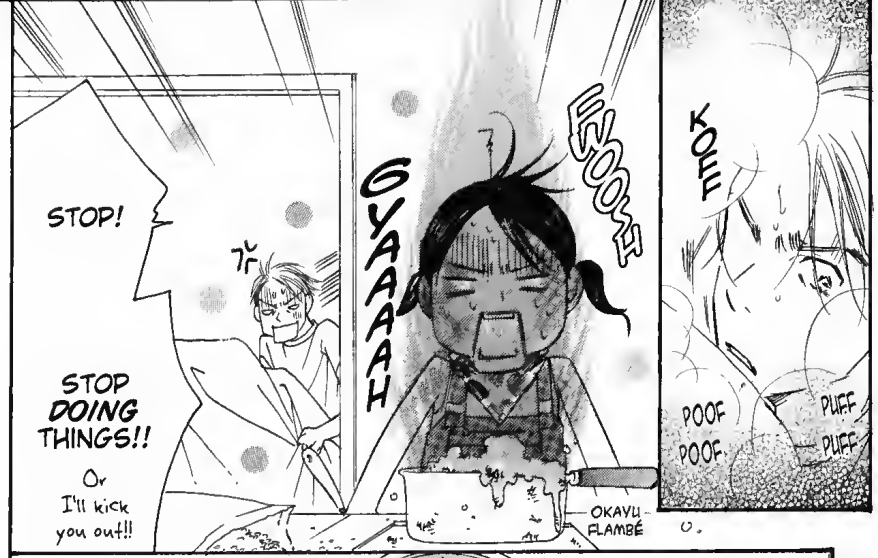

MY DAD SAYS EVERYONE HAS GOOD POINTS AND BAD POINTS!
DAD
I SMELL A HYPOCRITE.
KOFF

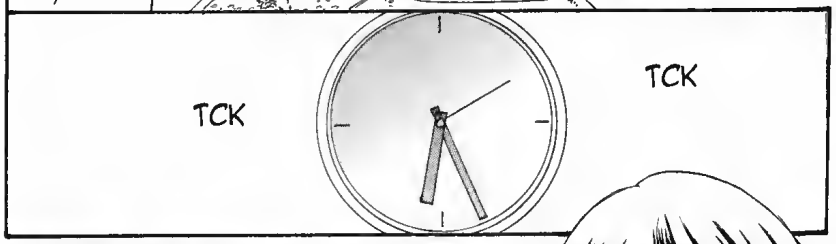
WOMEN ARE TOO EMOTIONAL! THEY LOVE TO NAG!
NOTHING BUT INCOHERENT JIBBER-JABBER.
THEY THINK THEY CAN GET WHATEVER THEY WANT BY CRYING.
"THERE'S A THIN LINE BETWEEN STRENGTH AND SENSITIVITY..."
"AND TRUE STRENGTH REQUIRES KINDNESS."
THIS IS AWFUL! I'M THE ONE WHO'S COMPLAINING NOW!
IF YOU CAN'T ACCEPT ME THE WAY I AM, WHY BOTHER?
KOFF


GET HER OUTTA HERE! AND QUICK!
I need to rest!
KOFF
I'm so sorry!
CHI...
...CAUSED YOU QUITE A BIT OF TROUBLE.
CAME TO PICK UP CHI


SAKURA! YOU CAN BORROW THIS.
TOK
KOFF

IT'S RELAXING!
...AND LISTEN TO THE SAND FALLING.
CLOSE YOUR EYES...
An... hour-glass?

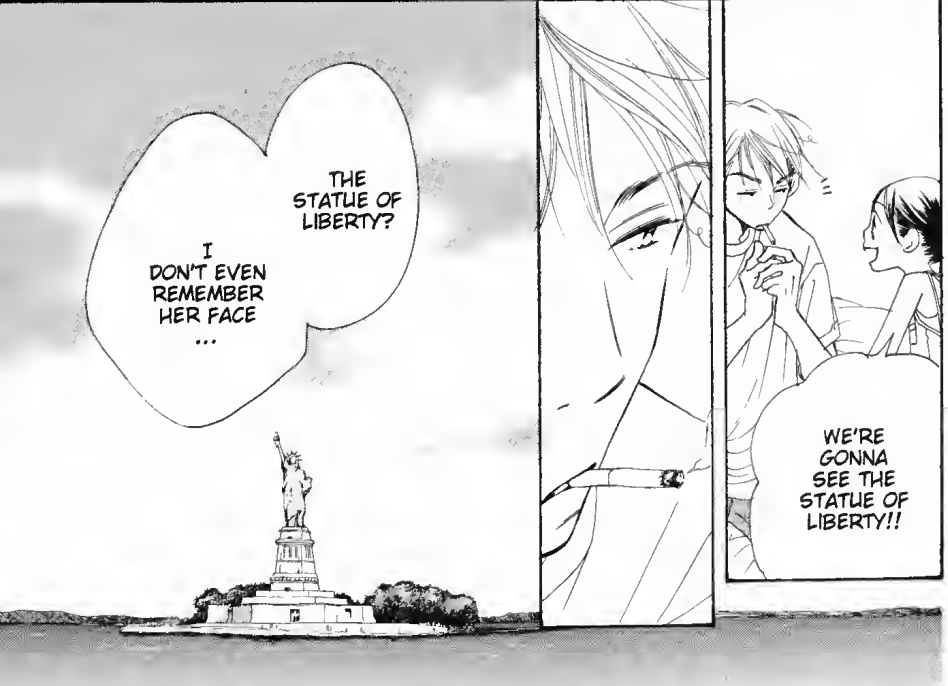

STOP!
STOP DOING THINGS!!
Or I'll kick you out!!
GYAAAAH
FSHOOH
OKAYU-FLAMBÉ
KOFF
POOF POOF
PUFF PUFF


TCK
TCK

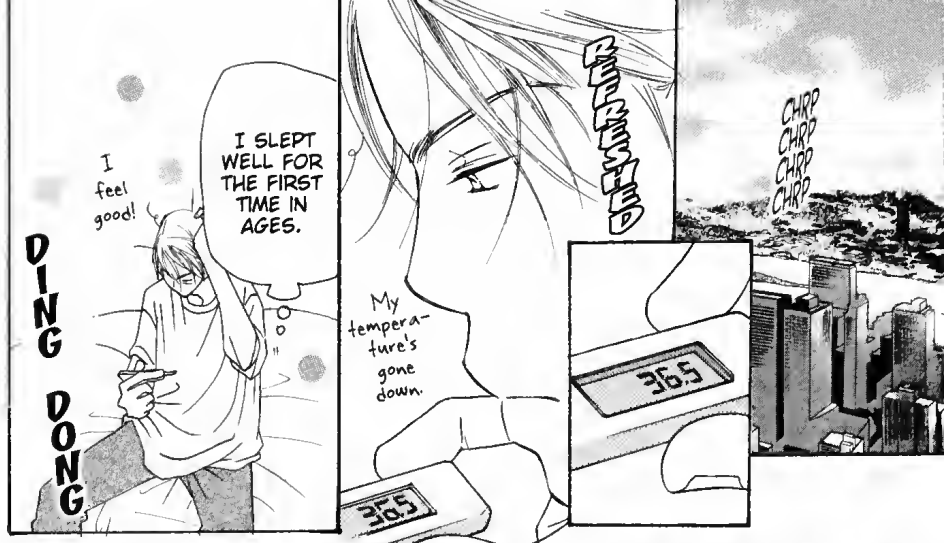
UM...
LOOKS LIKE...
PIZZA
MUNCH MUNCH
BURNED
...

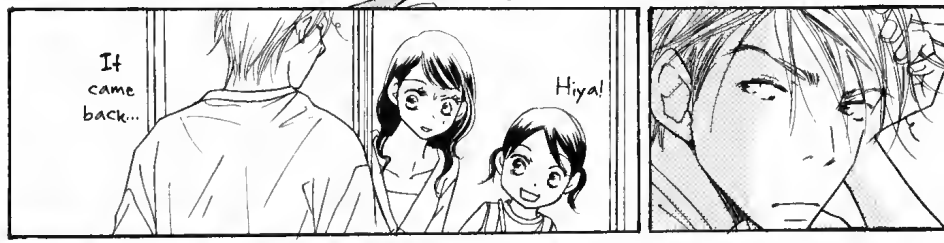
KSSSH
KSSSH

See you tomorrow!
GET SOME REST ...
...AND...
...YOU'LL FEEL BETTER.
SHE'S COMING BACK ?!
What?! "Tomorrow" ?!
KA-CHAK
"BORROW" ...?!
KSSSH
TOK


THE STATUE OF LIBERTY?
I DON'T EVEN REMEMBER HER FACE ...
WE'RE GONNA SEE THE STATUE OF LIBERTY!!

OOH! THAT'S HER! THAT'S HER!
HMM... She's kind of plain.
I can't wait to tell my friends!
KA-CHAK


DING DONG
I feel good!
I SLEPT WELL FOR THE FIRST TIME IN AGES.
My temperature's gone down.
35.5
35.5
REFRESHED
CHRP CHRP CHRP CHRP


It came back...
Hiya!

UM...
...NOT EXACTLY...
IF YOU'RE FEELING BETTER, YOU COULD HANG OUT WITH US!!
Forget about work!!

TOK
We brought you a present!
DID YOU TAKE TODAY OFF?
I did.

SEEMS LIKE...
...IF I DON'T GO IN FOR A DAY, I MIGHT NEVER GO BACK.
TO TELL THE TRUTH... I DON'T LIKE TO TAKE DAYS OFF.
ENORMOUS HIT!"
AIDA
THEY WANT IT ALL ...
...WITHOUT WORKING FOR IT.
PEOPLE LIKE TO TAKE THE EASY ROUTE.
ONCE YOU START THINKING LIKE THAT—YOU'RE DONE FOR.

YAAAY!
What a great view!
REALLY? WHY NOT?
MNCH MNCH
...BEEN HERE FOR SIX MONTHS...
...AND I'VE NEVER GONE SIGHT-SEEING.
Ate a lot of burgers, though.
HAD TO WORK.
I'VE...

"Summer Vacation"

I wanted to go to America to do research for this episode, but I didn't have enough time, so I borrowed a bunch of photos from a friend. I felt like I'd actually gone traveling!

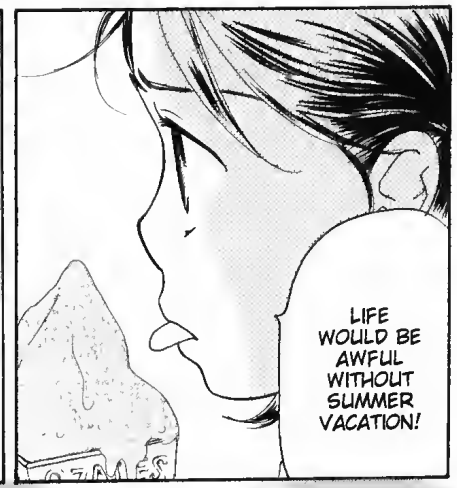
"Present"

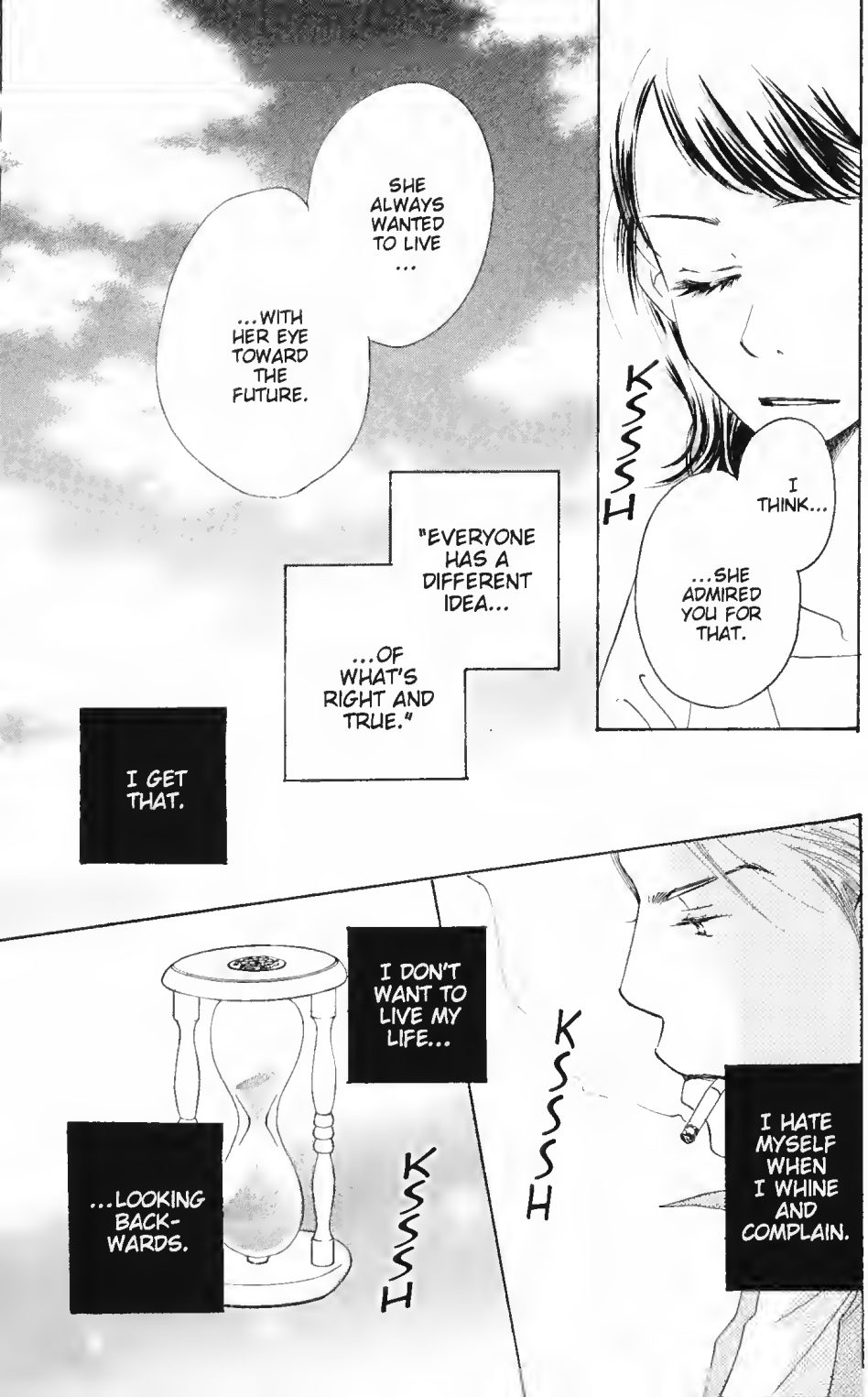
I wrote this manga as a short story for Betsucomi. I wanted to run it between volumes 5 and 6, but there weren't enough pages available, so I couldn't. Sorry! And sorry the dimensions are so weird!

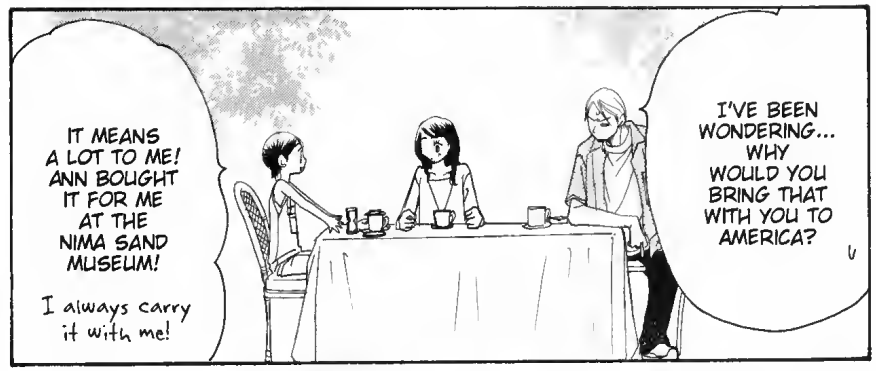
There's only one more volume of Sand Chronicles left. I hope you enjoy it!

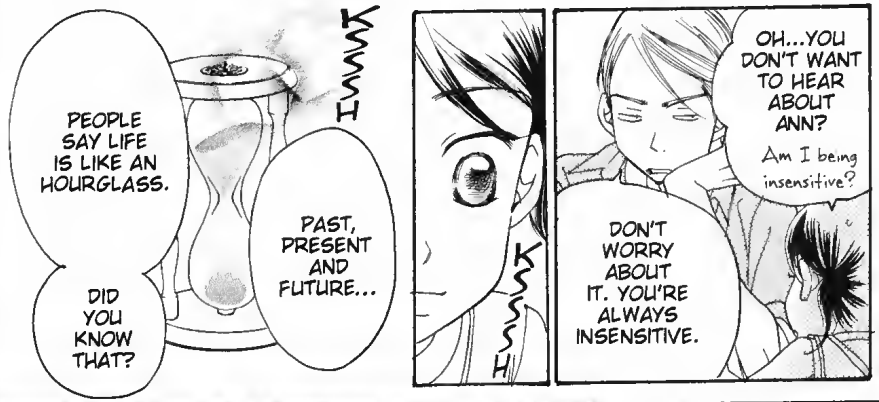
Thanks!

2/27/06
Hinako Ashihara




SHE ALWAYS WANTED TO LIVE ...
...WITH HER EYE TOWARD THE FUTURE.
"EVERYONE HAS A DIFFERENT IDEA...
...OF WHAT'S RIGHT AND TRUE."
I GET THAT.
KSSSH
I THINK...
...SHE ADMIRED YOU FOR THAT.
I DON'T WANT TO LIVE MY LIFE...
...LOOKING BACK-WARDS.
KSSSH
KSSSH
I HATE MYSELF WHEN I WHINE AND COMPLAIN.


IT MEANS A LOT TO ME! ANN BOUGHT IT FOR ME AT THE NIMA SAND MUSEUM!
I always carry it with me!
I'VE BEEN WONDERING... WHY WOULD YOU BRING THAT WITH YOU TO AMERICA?


PEOPLE SAY LIFE IS LIKE AN HOURGLASS.
DID YOU KNOW THAT?
KSSSH
PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE...
KSSSH
OH...YOU DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT ANN?
Am I being insensitive?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. YOU'RE ALWAYS INSENSITIVE.

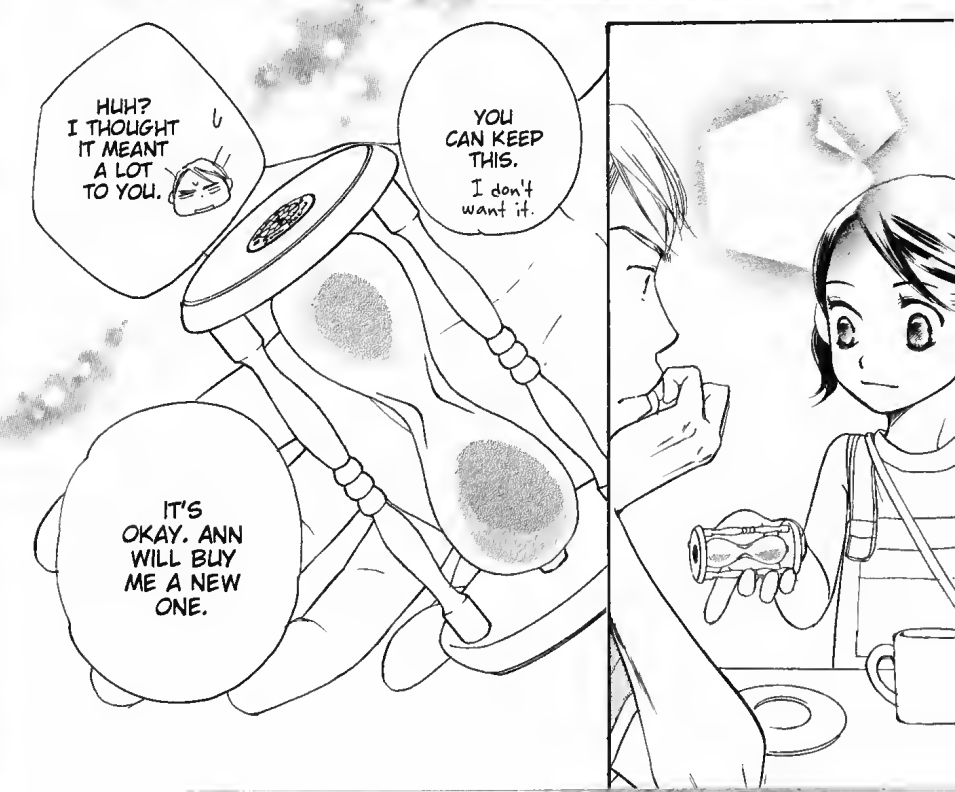
SHE SAID, "SAKURA IS THE KIND OF MAN WHO DOESN'T LOOK BACK AT FALLEN SAND."
...TOLD ME ABOUT YOU.
KSSSH
NOPE.
Sounds sappy.
ANN...

ME, YOU, SHIKA...
I WANT...
...EVERYONE TO BE HAPPY.
PEOPLE I KNOW AND PEOPLE I DON'T KNOW.
EVERYONE.
AM I A "HYPO-CRITE" TOO?
NO.

OH...
That's a surprise.
After I dumped her?
HMM ...
HUH ?!
SHE'S GOT A NEW BOY-FRIEND.
THEY'RE GONNA GET MARRIED AND MOVE TO SHIMANE.
ANN'S DOING WELL.
FICKLE.
ARE YOU RELIEVED?
...I GUESS THAT'S JUST HOW WOMEN ARE.
...BUT YOU HELPED ME WHEN I WAS IN TROUBLE.
THAT WAS NICE.
I ALWAYS THOUGHT YOU MUST BE A REAL JERK...
More like I'm disap-pointed.
WHY WOULD I BE?!
I DUNNO. I JUST FIGURED YOU'D BE HAPPY FOR HER.

HANG IN THERE, SAKURA!
DON'T LET PEOPLE GET YOU DOWN!
AND DON'T WORK TOO HARD!
TAKE TIME OFF TO GET YOUR ENERGY BACK!

WHAT ABOUT YOU, SAKURA? YOU'VE GOTTA GO TO WORK TOMORROW, RIGHT?
OKAY!
TIME TO GO HOME, CHI. It's getting late.
YOU'RE JUST A KID.
YOU'RE ALLOWED.


HUH? I THOUGHT IT MEANT A LOT TO YOU.
YOU CAN KEEP THIS. I don't want it.
IT'S OKAY. ANN WILL BUY ME A NEW ONE.

She's weak!
...I DON'T REGRET A THING!!
OKAY!
He's handsome!
That was a surprise.
Nah. I like Fuji better.
Huh? My bratty brother ?!

"WHY WOULD I STAY WITH HER IF I DON'T WANT HER?"
"SENSITIVITY RUINS PEOPLE."
"THAT'S WHAT I BELIEVE. AND I'LL NEVER CHANGE."
WHEN YOU GET HOME...
...TELL YOUR SISTER...
"I HATE PEOPLE WHO ARE WEAK AND SPOILED MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE IN THE WORLD."

"I DO BETTER...
...AFTER A BREAK."
HONNN
SHE MIGHT HAVE A POINT.

STUFF
WHEW!
THE TYPHOON SUBSIDES ...
RUSTLE
TODAY'S PRICES ON THE STOCK MARKET ...

She gave my address to a complete stranger!
CHANGED MY MIND.
HUH...?
I tried to call, but you didn't answer...
WHEN I DO QUIT...
Just you watch!
I'LL SEND THEM ALL ON A PERMANENT VACATION.
He's a devil!
I can do it!
...I'M TAKING HER AND HIM AND HIM DOWN TO HELL WITH ME!
It's not polite to point.

HONNK
SAKURA!
I THOUGHT YOU QUIT.
OH! BOSS!
EXCELLENT.
HOW WAS YOUR VACATION?
PAT

CHI-RRR
CHI-RRR
CHI-RRR
SUMMER MEMORIES
CHI MINASE
IT'S MY LIFE.
HEART-LESS?
SELFISH?
WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?

ANN!
I'm still on vacation! ♡
HURRY UP! YOU'LL BE LATE FOR WORK!
You have to catch the early train!
ANN!!
ZZZZ
TOLD YOU !!
Good mn'g :D
...I'M GLAD.

CH-CHI...? Um...
WHAT THE HECK IS THIS?!
OH. YOU SAW THAT.
Been meaning to tell you...
PALE
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU...
CHIRR CHIRR CHIRR
HE WAS WORKING HARD.
...WENT TO SEE HIM!
DON'T WORRY. HE WASN'T MAD.
Well, maybe a little...
Why ?!
Sorry!
HE WAS OKAY ...
...EXCEPT FOR A COLD.

HANG IN THERE, SAKURA!
HAVE A NICE DAY!!
DON'T LET THEM GET YOU DOWN!
AND DON'T WORK TOO HARD!
TAKE TIME OFF...
...TO GET YOUR ENERGY BACK!

Summer Vacation: The End

THE PRESENT

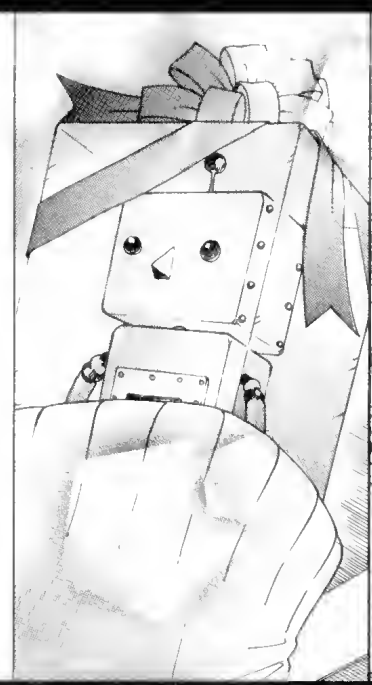
I'M HOME.
NO. YOUR DAD WOULDN'T LIKE ALL THAT NOISE.
Welcome back
COME ON! I wanna have one!
SHIKA'S AT IT AGAIN...
PLEASE!
SETTLE DOWN!
ENEMY.
THE WORLD BECAME MY ENEMY.
A CHRISTMAS PARTY?
EVERYONE'S CHRISTMAS SPIRIT...
...GOT ON MY NERVES.
CHRISTMAS SUPER SALE

WHAT ABOUT YOU, FUJI?
I'm lowering my expectations this year...
DABO
HA HA
What a cheapskate!
MY MOM GIVES ME SOMETHING HANDMADE EVERY YEAR. LAST YEAR I ASKED FOR A VIDEO GAME, AND SHE MADE A GO BOARD OUT OF CARDBOARD!
FUJI
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, 2ND GRADE
HMPH
What's cool about being a grinch?!
Way cool!
He's so cool!
You're rich— I bet you get awesome presents!
WHAT DO YOU WANT FOR CHRISTMAS?
CHRISTMAS PRESENTS?
I WASN'T LIKE OTHER KIDS.
WE DON'T CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS. IT'S A STUPID HOLIDAY.

RRIP
WAAAH
Fuji ruined my garland!
NGH...
WHAT A PEST!
AND IF WE ASK DAD, I'M SURE HE'LL—
MOM IS REALLY NICE!

SANTA WON'T EVER COME HERE!
HOW CHILDISH!
HE ONLY VISITS HOMES FULL OF LOVE!!
OUR HOME'S GOT LOVE!
SO?
IF WE HAD A CHRISTMAS TREE AND ATE CHRISTMAS CAKE LIKE YUMI'S FAMILY...
SANTA DOESN'T FEEL WELCOME HERE!
...SANTA WOULD VISIT US!!
Help me with this, Fuji!!
Santa's a foreigner
SHIKA
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, 1ST GRADE
STICK STICK
STICK
OUR FAMILY'S TOO TRADITIONAL ...
MY SISTER STILL BELIEVES IN SANTA.

Sand Chronicles "The Present"

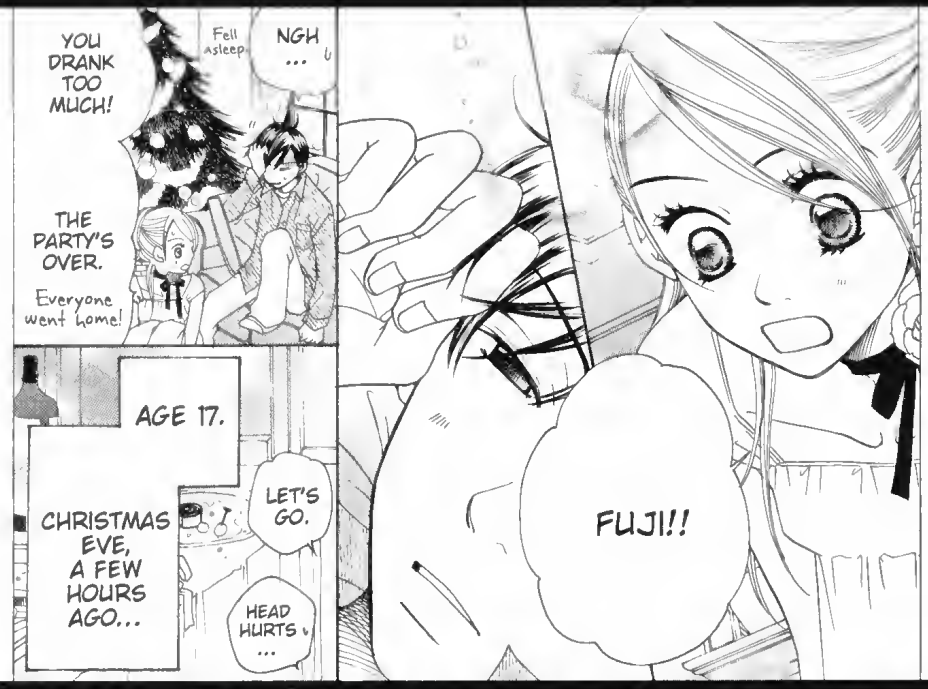


Sand Chronicles "The Present"

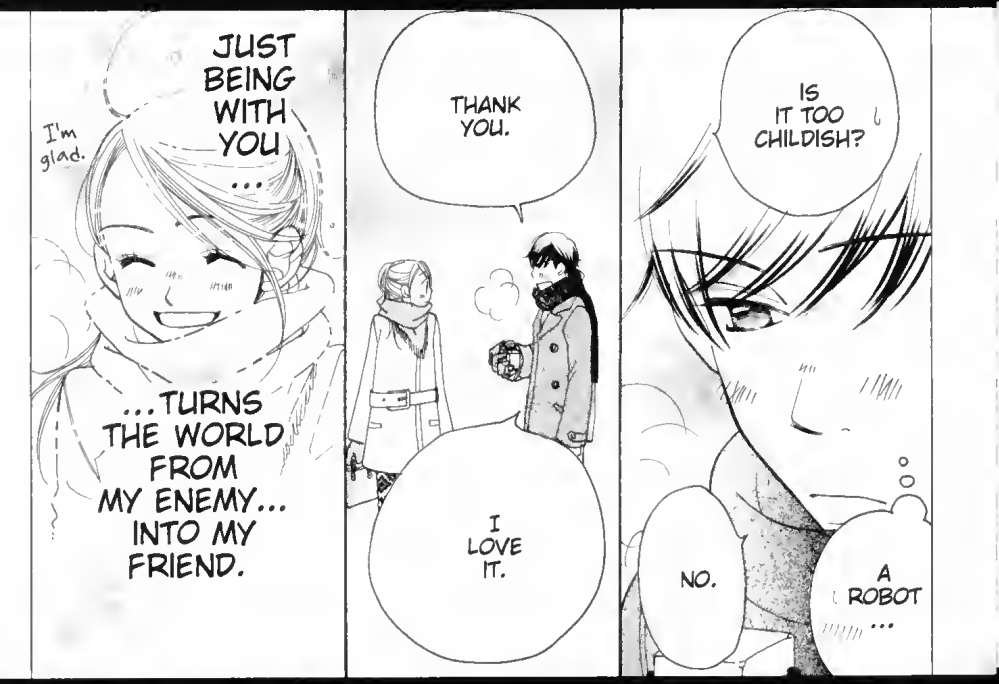
TODAY ...
Good morning, ma'am. You're up early ...
...
STAGGER
...I'D BE ABLE TO THANK HER...
WAAAH
Fuji hit me!
ARE YOU REALLY THAT STUPID, SHIKA?!!
WHAM
Apologize to Santa!!

No acorns for you!
TALKS
BUT ...
YUMI SAID SANTA IS REALLY YOUR MOM AND DAD...
Is that true?
THEY WOULD NEVER DO SOME-THING LIKE THIS!!
DON'T BE SILLY!
I GOT A BEAR!!
A robot !
SHAKE
SHAKE
HNNGH?
SHIKA! SHIKA, WAKE UP!!
SANTA CAME!! HE CAME !!

...BUT TELLING MYSELF NOT TO IN CASE I'M DISAP-POINTED.
I'M GETTING MY HOPES UP...
OH...
I GOT YOU...
THE WAY I FEEL WAITING FOR HER ANSWER...
Rudolph the red-nosed rein-deer ♪...
...IS JUST LIKE THE WAY I FELT AS A CHILD WAITING FOR A CHRISTMAS PRESENT.
...ANN AND I WERE TALKING...
"I'LL TRY TO THINK ABOUT IT. I'LL GIVE IT SOME SERIOUS THOUGHT. SO... JUST GIVE ME A LITTLE MORE TIME, OKAY?"

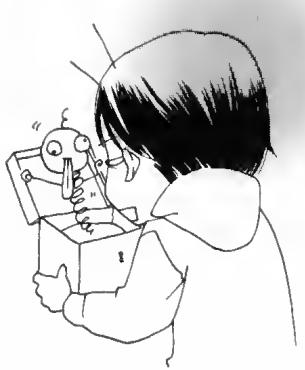


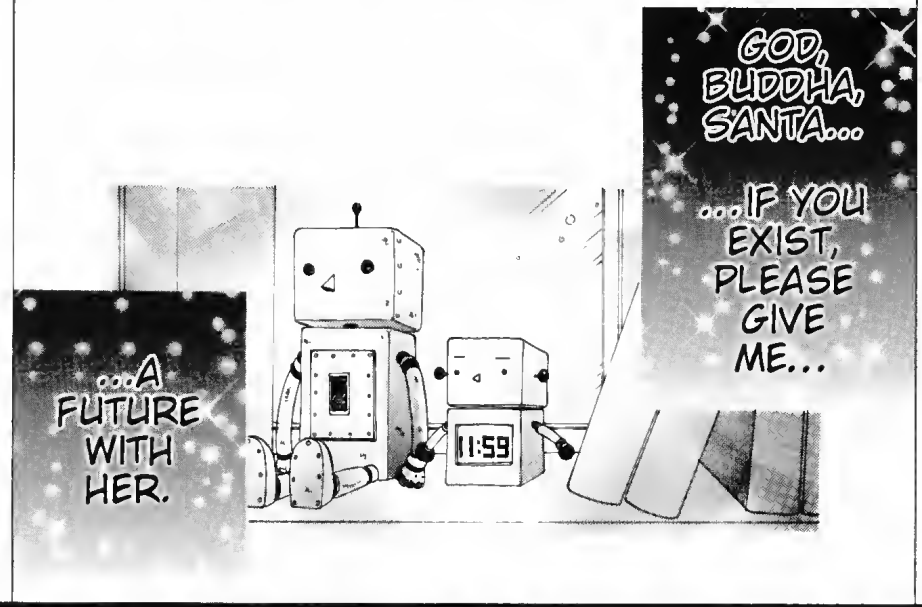
Sand Chronicles "The Present"



YOU GAVE ME A BIRTHDAY PRESENT.
I WANTED TO RETURN THE FAVOR. It's good manners.
FOR ME?!
SO I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE THIS.
I NOTICED YOU HAVE A TIN ROBOT ON YOUR BOOKSHELF. SEEMED LIKE IT WAS IMPORTANT TO YOU...
Here!
A CHRISTMAS PRESENT!

Sand Chronicles "The Present"





The Present: The End

Sand Chronicles "The Present"

Profile of Hinako Ashihara

The other day I left some things I'd bought—shopping bag and all—on a bus. I didn't notice until about a week later! Am I losing my memory?

—Hinako Ashihara

Hinako Ashihara won the 50th Shogakukan Manga Award for *Sunadokei*. She debuted with *Sono Hanashi Okotowari Shimasu* in *Bessatsu Shojo Comics* in 1994. Her other works include *SOS*, *Forbidden Dance*, and *Tennen Bitter Chocolate*.

Glossary

If only adolescence came with an instruction manual. We can't give you that, but this glossary of terms might prove useful for this volume.

Page 19, panel 2: *koban*
In Japan, police boxes, or *koban*, can be easily found in every community and are a place where people can freely stop in to ask for help.

Page 34, panel 1: *"How many matches can they hold?"*
A saying about how the longer a girl's eyelashes are, the more matches can be stacked on them.

Page 34, panel 2: *"Mummy hunters wind up as mummies."*
A Japanese proverb that means mummy hunters end up dying and drying up in a crypt themselves. An English equivalent might be, "Go for wool and come home shorn."

Page 80, panel 1: *"It's thinner than your legs!"*
Japanese radishes (daikon) are long, thick and white—not at all like typical small, round and red radishes popular in the West. When someone has thick calves, it's said she has daikon-ashi, or radish-legs.

Page 81, panel 5: *"smitten...mitten"*
The Japanese has a different pun. When Miwako rushes in out of breath she says, "*Su*!" This is the first syllable of *suki*, the "like" in "I met someone I like!!" *Su* could be taken for the word for vinegar, among other homonyms. So Hiroko asks, "Vinegar?"

Page 128, panel 5: *kayu*
Okayu or *kayu* is rice congee.